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# An Exploration of the Effects of Collectivism and Individualism on Maintaining Societal Cohesiveness and Encouraging Cross-Societal International Relations by the Review of a Sample of Societal Mechanics

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Submitted to the Program of Organizational Dynamics In the Graduate Division of the School of Arts and Sciences In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Philosophy with a Concentration in Global Organizations at the University of Pennsylvania

Advisor: Larry Starr

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# An Exploration of the Effects of Collectivism and Individualism on Maintaining Societal Cohesiveness and Encouraging Cross-Societal International Relations by the Review of a Sample of Societal Mechanics

## **Abstract**

A functional society is a society that has found its balance between the extremes of 100% Individualism (Chaos) and 100% Collectivism (Stagnation). Thorough exploration of the influences that the institutions of Society, Family, Education, Work Environment and Religion have on the members of a particular society allows for an understanding of the mechanics which work to shape and influence societies from generation to generation. Following a review of multiple pieces of literature and personal interactions and observations in select societies (China, Czech Republic, Greece and Sweden) the extrapolation can be made that there are two distinct societal types, collectivist and individualist. Although it is often speculated that a society must utilize one extreme or the other, in reality societies try to balance between the extremes of stagnation and chaos as a means of self preservation. The institutions used by societies to enforce compliance among its membership are essentially universal; however, the methods by which societies choose to maintain cohesiveness differ from society to society and are influenced by changes in technology and information sharing on a global scale. These factors serve to explain why degrees of both individualism and collectivism can be found in each functional society currently in existence. The balance of these two societal extremes allows a society to optimally function and maintain harmony. This balance is by no means stagnant. Societies constantly struggle toward one extreme or the other. Functional societies find themselves being drawn back toward the middle over time, with no society every truly obtaining a perfect equilibrium. An understanding of the dynamics at work in this cycle enhances our ability to function in our own society and interact with other societies on an international scale.

## **Comments**

Submitted to the Program of Organizational Dynamics In the Graduate Division of the School of Arts and Sciences In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Philosophy with a Concentration in Global Organizations at the University of Pennsylvania

Advisor: Larry Starr



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INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS BY THE REVIEW OF A SAMPLE OF SOCIETIAL  
MECHANICS

by

David M. Marciniszyn

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In the Graduate Division of the School of Arts and Sciences  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
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Larry M. Starr, Ph.D., Program Director

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

*“The utmost extent of man’s knowledge is to know that he knows nothing.”*

Joseph Addison (1672–1719), English essayist. *Interesting Anecdotes, Memoirs, Allegories, Essays, and Poetical Fragments*, “Essay on Pride” (1794).<sup>1</sup>

#### Background

Effective management is difficult enough in your own country: trying to understand what makes your subordinate, colleague or boss tick, finding out what management style would be effective in your organization at a particular point in time, while always being aware of the ‘bottom line’. Add in the factor of culture and cross-cultural management situations easily reach new heights of complexity (Mark, 1999, p. 39).

Via the Organizational Dynamics program I had the opportunity to participate in select foreign studies established in various countries and gain exposure to a multitude of varying cultures. Prior to these studies I had reviewed multiple pieces of literature, including Prof. Geert Hofstede’s work entitled Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind, in order to prepare me for the societal differences I would encounter on my travels. While writing my first international paper I realized that a country’s culture, values and institutions are linked in shaping the type of society a country or group has, which led me to hypothesize that at the macro level those countries maintaining functioning societies must fall into two classifiable areas, briefly summed up as “individualist” and “collectivist.”

Each subsequent paper built on the groundwork of the balance of these two societal extremes and the constant struggle of the societies involved to meet somewhere in the middle,

establishing an equilibrium (or balance) between the two that serves to allow the society to function at an optimal level. Throughout the course of my travels I observed that none of the countries involved in my studies was able to reach a perfect balance; rather, they tended to fall somewhere to the right or the left of the median on a scale between absolute collectivism and absolute individualism. By understanding this dynamic I was able to hypothesize that extremes in either direction break down the ability of the society to function and that recognition of the variations in a society's "type" facilitates greater understanding with regard to fostering communication and peaceful relations between uniquely different cultures.

When viewing societies at a macro level it can be surmised that a society reaching an extreme, whether individualist or collectivist, will be faced with severe dysfunction and societal breakdown. Individualist and collectivist societies can be clearly defined with the use of Professor Geert Hofstede's (1997) paradigm; however, the two can be simplistically illustrated by stating that individualist societies are typified by focus on the individual and traits that value individual achievements and responsibilities, while collectivist societies are devoted to society as a whole, encouraging collective values and responsibilities that places the well being of the group ahead of that of an individual (Hofstede, 1997, p. 53).

Each of these two extremes prohibits the healthy functioning of society, which is why via Hofstede we are able to see that societies fall on one side of the spectrum or the other but do not reach the poles. Individualist tendencies are needed to stimulate progress and development; collective traits are important to maintain harmony and working relationships. Pure collectivity smothers motivation, breeding a stagnation that will, in time, bring about that society's



destruction. Members of a truly collective society receive no reward for going above and beyond their predetermined role; therefore, they choose not to do so.

Conversely, a purely individualistic society would promote self interest over societal interest and breed chaos. Society itself is based on its social organization, or social order. As chaos is defined as “total disorder” (Webster’s II, 1984, p. 120), the introduction of chaos would attack the root of society itself and quickly cause the hierarchal structure to crumble like a house with a fault in its foundation.

Since societies are found not on but in between these two polar opposites they share a unique but generalized set of goals, interests and beliefs concerning their own personal advancement and that of their peers as a whole. My research has revealed that members of a society, regardless of where the society is located or where it falls on the spectrum, share symbols and values that grant them a common understanding. This understanding is vital to their ability to maintain peaceful domestic relations.

An exploration of the mechanisms which both regulate a society and bind it together will allow its key features to be generalized and categorized under a specific societal “type”. It is not until all parties involved are able to reach an understanding of the level of difference between one society and another that enhanced communications between the two can be achieved and an internal translation program can be built that will allow messages to be understood throughout multiple societies utilizing not only a common language, but a common set of symbols and context.

This type of enhanced communication mechanism, built on an understanding of societal dynamics, would allow members of different societies to associate freely at both a personal and an

executive level. The rapid expansion of the global marketplace has made open communication vital; a society that is unable to communicate with its neighbors will rapidly find itself unable to effectively compete in the growing international market.

Throughout the exploration of the hypothesized significance of societal types on a society's mores and values the systems of various nationalities will be studied in depth and compared to those found in the United States, with an emphasis on the exploration of potential ramifications of cross cultural business dealings. The inherently complex nature of societies makes it impossible to explain all of the underpinnings of each group's formation and dynamics; however, an exploration of the key features of these societies will illustrate the importance of maintaining equilibrium in order to keep a society functional and introduce the significance of global societal classification as it pertains to international relations.

## CHAPTER 2

### SOCIETY, CULTURE, VALUES, INSTITUTIONS AND THE INDIVIDUAL

A society is not a living thing, able to grow and function on its own. Rather, a society is made up of individuals who have been influenced by their peers to conform to the expectations of the society for its members. It is implied throughout the course of their “training” that failure to adhere to these standards will result in expulsion, encouraging members to strive to assimilate themselves accordingly. Members of a society learn how to deport themselves appropriately via verbal and non-verbal communication with their contemporaries and the leaders of various societal institutions, such as the school or the church.

It is important to note that a member of society can learn proper decorum only through interaction with their contemporaries; cultures change, albeit gradually, and so do their rules and writs. Major cultural changes must take place via a progressive leader, allowing them to remain few and far between, but small cultural changes occur in society almost daily.

The key to successful interaction on both a personal and professional level with members of another society is an understanding of the inherent differences in its makeup. The inability to recognize societal difference leads to poor communication and understanding. An exploration of societal dynamics is the first step in diverting the potential catastrophe which may result. By understanding the mechanisms of the two types of society mentioned in Chapter 1 indicators can be used to identify a particular culture as being individualistic or collectivistic, allowing their differences to be classified and recognized and the lines of communication to remain open from the first introduction rather than after relations have crumbled.



## The Society

True familiarity with specific aspects of a society cannot be reached without first developing an awareness of the basic components that constitute the building blocks of society itself. A society is defined as “a group of human beings bound together by shared institutions and culture...An association of people with mutual aims or interests” (Webster’s II, 1984, p. 665). Anthropological and sociological definitions further define societies into classifications specific to their values, religion, taboos, and customs.

For a society and its members to function and to survive individuals must participate in a mutually beneficial exchange of goods and services, both internally and externally. Members do this with the aid of a shared set of beliefs and goals that allow them to “get along” effectively in the hopes of achieving desired communal objectives. A more complete definition of a society presents it as a social union of individuals with a shared set of beliefs and goals propagated by a self-perpetuating set of ingrained patterns. These beliefs and goals are handed down from generation to generation, both consciously and unconsciously, through societal interactions that facilitate assimilation and promote survival.

Societies are built upon a foundation of three subsystems, each of which facilitates open communication and understanding among their members. These subsystems are commonly known as culture, values and institutions and serve to set boundaries for membership and promote the continuation of the society as a whole.

## Culture

Terpstra and David define a society’s culture as “a learned, compelling set of symbols that is shared among persons who have been similarly socialized...These symbols have meanings that



enable members of a society to classify, code prioritize, and justify social reality” (1991, pp. 10-11). Members of a society which have been immersed in its culture know that certain symbols, gestures and inflections mean certain things and will generate a specific, predictable reaction when employed in personal interaction. Unfamiliarity with aspects of a society’s culture can lead to miscommunication and confusion, and has often been a point of contention in the severing of intersocietal relations in the past.

### Value Systems

Creating a system of communication and mutual understanding between members of a society does not, in and of itself, maintain societal cohesion. To maintain social order it is first necessary to establish a value system-the conscious or unconscious mechanism that produces the underlying feelings of what is right and what is wrong which can be used as a means of regulation in society to set the boundaries within which an individual is permitted to function. Members traveling too close to individualism in a collective society will be regulated back to collectivism by their government and their peers, while an individualistic society will encourage great individualism in its collectively minded member.

A society’s particular, unique value system is passed on from generation to generation and promoted by other members of society. This value system operates primarily on a subconscious level for those who are native to a particular way of life, with many mores and guidelines being understood rather than written and taught. This unconscious understanding of societal boundaries makes assimilation easy for members who are born into a society but very difficult for those entering from different walks of life.

The inherent need of all individuals to belong to a social unit within their society serves to propagate the subconscious standards of a society's value system and to assimilate newcomers.

Thomas Beauchamp writes,

Ethics is a "branch of politics"...That both politics and ethics are concerned (with the study of the) nature and promotion of human well-being, and that these topics can be studied only within the context of society. Aristotle sees individuals as essentially members of a social unit. He believes that moral actions can be promoted only by the support of a social group and that laws and the threat of punishment are required to foster morality and to elevate ideals of virtuous conduct (1982, pp. 154-155).

Beauchamp's words, coupled with the sentiments of Aristotle, serve to reinforce the necessity of an interconnected network of individuals in the establishment of an intrinsic value system in a society's infrastructure and the utilization of that value system to foster conformity among its members.

It is through Aristotle that the necessity of a system of consequence to keep a value system active in a society comes to light. Societies across the globe have a unique web of consequences which, once sprung, will serve to sharply draw the independently minded individual back into the metaphorical fold. In most societies it is the threat of ostracization and banishment that keeps its members adherent to its particular set of mores and values, playing on the basic need of humans to be accepted by their peers and ensuring that the passage of a society's subconscious beliefs and boundaries will continue unhindered.

#### Culture, as It Relates to the Value System

Elizabeth Marks was among the first to expand farther on Hofstede's manifestation of culture by presenting a breakdown of its varying components. Like an onion, a society has many layers. On the outer, or revealed, layer are the symbols, heroes and rituals. These aspects of a

society are easy for the casual observer to see and readily provide a glimpse into the fundamentals of its inner workings. Not so readily visible is the subconscious value system that comprises the inner layer (1997, p. 43).

Rather than being a single entity, it can be inferred that culture and values actually exist as separate, interconnected subsystems of society. The definition of culture and values states that values act as a regulatory system hand in hand with culture, “a learned, compelling set of symbols that is shared among persons who have been similarly socialized...These symbols have meanings that enable members of a society to classify, code prioritize, and justify social reality” (Terpstra and David, 1991, pp. 10-11). Only after prioritization and classification take place within a society’s culture can a notion of right and wrong be developed and a comprehensive value system established.

## Societal Mechanics: The Forces and the Balance

Figure 1 Personal Chart of the Driving Forces of Society  
Based on Hofstede's Work and Personal Observation and Research

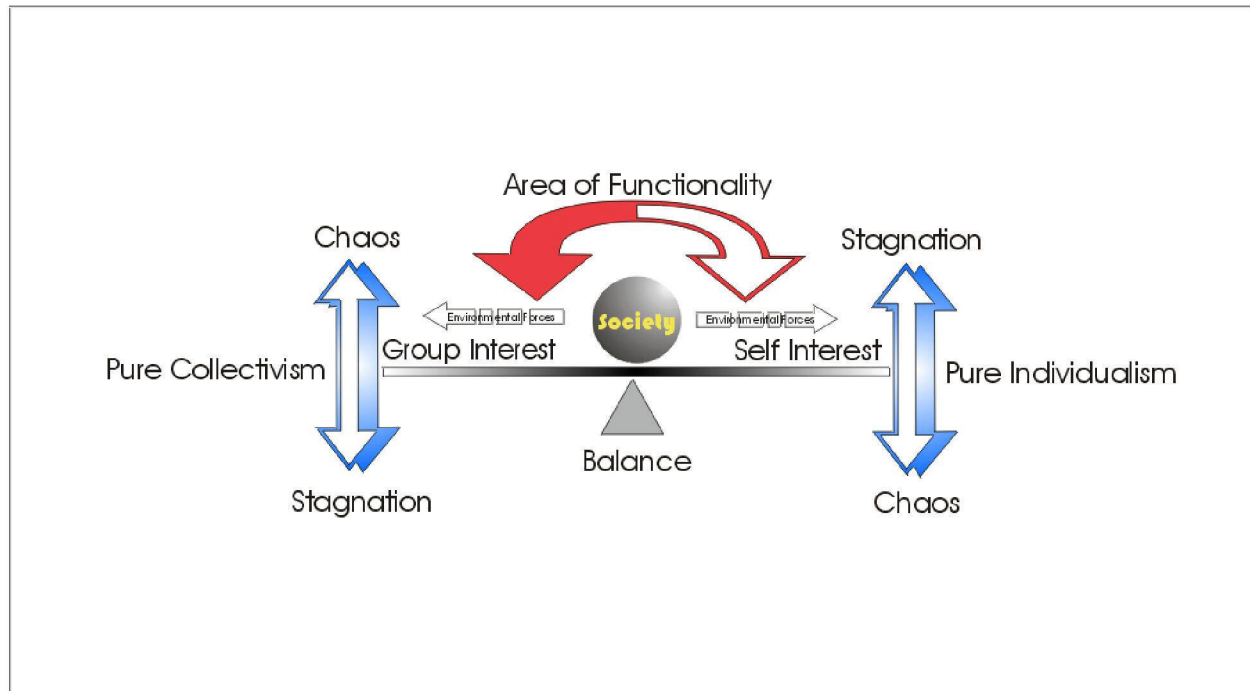


Figure 1 illustrates the “area of functionality” between the extremes of individualism and collectivism within which a society must balance in order to keep from slipping into chaos or stagnation. The ideal of an economically functioning society would fall toward the middle of Hofstede’s chart, evenly balanced between collective and individualist tendencies (p. 74-75); however, within these boundaries is a wide expanse which allows a functional society a tremendous amount of diversity. Furthermore, Hofstede noted that among individual members of the same society individual value systems can be found, suggesting that even within a single society differing degrees of collectivism and individualism are able to harmoniously co-exist.



### Individualism and Collectivism Defined as Societal Poles

In his writings Hofstede provided the following definition of individualism and collectivism:

Individualism pertains to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family. Collectivism as its opposite pertains to societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people's lifetimes continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty (Hofstede, 1997, p. 51).

Hofstede suggested that the determination of an individualistic or collectivistic society is made not by examining a society's relationship with the individual but by the individual's relationship with their society, and he defined the differences between the two in the following excerpt:

The vast majority of people in our world live in societies in which the interest of the group prevails over the interest of the individual. I will call these societies collectivist...It does not refer to the power of the state over the individual but to the power of the group. The first group in our lives is always the family into which we are born...In most collectivist societies the 'family' within which the child grows up consists of a number of people living closely together...for example, grandparents, uncles, aunts...When children grow up they learn to think of themselves as part of the 'we' group...The 'we' group (or in-group) is the major source of one's identity, and the only secure protection...one owes lifelong loyalty to one's in-group...Between the person and the in-group a dependence relationship develops...(Conversely) a minority of people in our world live in societies in which the interests of the individual prevail over the interests of the group, societies which I will call individualistic...Children are born into families consisting of two parents...Relatives live elsewhere and are rarely seen. This type is the nuclear family...Children from such families, as they grow up; soon learn to think of themselves as 'I'...Playmates, for example, are chosen on the basis of personal preferences. Not infrequently, children, after having left home, reduce relationships with their parents to a minimum (Hofstede, 1997, pp. 50-51).

Despite the growing trend of individualism among the global community, members of individualist societies are the minority when compared to the vast quantity of societies that retain strong collectivistic roots. This can present major difficulties for societies with a strong

individualistic bent, such as the United States, attempting to break into the international marketplace, as they may not share a vision of the ultimate outcome of each merger. Among many collectivistic societies individualists are seen as being too self-centered and cutthroat to do business with, while individualists may feel that these collectivistic societies are continuing to live in the past and limit the ability of members of their society to explore their full potential.

### Institutions

Value systems and culture, the components of a society which determine where on Hofstede's chart it will land, are learned, as has been illustrated time and again by physicians and researchers exploring the difference between nature and nurture. Since humans are not solitary creatures by nature the experiences which form these building blocks are created through interaction with other individuals whose actions are dictated by values that have been passed down from generation to generation and through their surrounding environment.

Hofstede states, "the programming (of culture) starts within the family; it continues within the neighborhood, at school, in youth groups, at the workplace, and in the living community" (1997, p. 4). It is through the nuclear family unit that children first begin to learn the values and culture that will allow them to become productive members of society later in life. As they grow their "family" will expand to include their friends, co-workers and other members of their society which must work together in order to survive. This family unit is one of many institutions that will play a role in passing on established cultural norms throughout the lifespan of each individual and from generation to generation.



### Societal Members as Individuals

It is often far too easy when approaching the study and classification of a society as a whole to discount the unique personalities of its members that render impossible the presence of an absolute. Even among the most collectivistic of societies specific differences exist which allow its members to keep a separate and complete personality without sacrificing the well being of the “in-group” to which they belong. Hofstede describes personality as an individual’s:

Unique...set of mental programs which (s) he does not share with any other human being. It is based upon traits which are partly inherited with the individual’s unique set of genes and partly learned. ‘Learned’ means: modified by the influence of collective programming (culture) as well as unique personal experiences. (1997, p. 6).

Despite the fact that a person’s experiences throughout the course of their lifetime will have a tremendous impact on their personality people are not machines destined to act on their “programming”. Humans have the unique ability to stray from their “mental programs” and “to react in ways which are new, creative, destructive, or unexpected” (Hofstede, 1997, p. 4). Their innate character, blended with human nature (defined by Hofstede as “The human ability to feel fear, anger, love, joy, sadness, the need to associate with others, to play and exercise oneself, the facility to observe the environment and talk about it with other humans (1997, p. 5)) will determine the person they will ultimately be and the role they will play in their society (1997, Hofstede, p. 6).

All individuals at some point in their lives will experience feelings of fear, anger, love, joy and sadness, as well as the need to exercise, play, associate with others, and interact with their environment. This is an innate quality of human nature, predictable and consistent regardless of the type of society an individual chooses to be a part of.

The establishment of a value system, the teaching of right and wrong, is an externally based behavior developed through consequence-related stimuli. Blending these two qualities together, both nature and nurture, creates a wholly unique individual. This uniqueness, and the ability of the human race to step out of its “safety zone” and act in irrational and unnatural ways, is what breeds confusion in a society.

An understanding of the confusion that personality can cause is essential because the labels “collectivist” and “individualistic” primarily apply when approaching society from a macro viewpoint. Greek history tells us that “the first lyric poet Archilochus (?716-c. 650)...may (have been) an individualist, but nevertheless (operated) within a collective context, civil as well as military” (Green, 1995, pp. 61 & 75). His was an example of an “individual voice” working outside certain literary boundaries but still constrained by the collectivistic view.

This behavioral paradox exemplifies Hofstede’s statement that “the behavior corresponding with a desirable character depends on the cultural environment” (1997, p. 59). Those individual behavior patterns considered to be appropriate are determined by the mindset of the group as a whole; however, even constrained there is room for individual expressionism. Interactions with a single individual should not be considered to be accurate indicators concerning a society’s tendency toward collectivism or individualism. Any research into a society’s culture and mores which focuses on the individual can serve as a macro level guide to the functioning of the society as a whole but is not always accurate at the micro level.

#### Uniqueness, Communication and Complications

In the interests of utilizing societal classification to further international relations it is the application of what is learned at the macro level to micro level interaction that presents the



greatest challenge. In light of the fact that individual personality cannot be construed as an indication of the thoughts, feelings and beliefs of the society as a whole many diplomats find themselves sinking quickly when forced to adopt their views.

For the individual that has been brought up within a culture but who does not share their school of thought communication is often difficult, despite the fact of their shared language and history. Take that difference and apply it to an individual from a separate culture who does not share a spoken tongue, does not understand body language or surface symbols and who may not make a concentrated effort to hear what their counterparts have to say in the mistaken belief that they have already properly classified the people of this culture and the difficulty increases a hundredfold (Barker, 1984, pg. 6 & pg. 60).

Consider for a moment that a series of gun shots are heard both in the country and in the city. The first thing the mind is going to do is leap to that which is familiar, then place that knowledge into a logical context that will apply to the situation. Most people, if questioned, would state that the gun shot in the country was likely related to a hunting expedition, while the discharge of a weapon on city streets could only be part of a crime.

Is it possible that someone was hunting in the city? The knee jerk reaction to this question would be an immediate and unconditional no; however, this is based more on the listener's interpretation of what is normal and familiar than on fact. What is interpreted one way in one society may be different in another; what may seem an elementary and logical explanation based on the past experiences of a single individual may not apply in another country.

Joseph Addison's previously quoted remarks concerning knowledge reveal that people only ever truly have a chance of knowing themselves; even then, they are not always truly aware

of why they do the things they do. Under the surface of every action and decision are driving values and assumptions made based on an individual understanding of time, place and behavior.

Establishing an opinion on the motivation behind the surface actions of a society based solely on either a macro or micro level observation can spell disaster for the individual attempting to cross diplomatic barriers. Surface behavior in a country may or may not be easy to explain. It must be understood that nationals understand the written and unwritten rules of their culture and apply them without thought on a daily basis; every micro-level interaction initiated throughout the course of research into the inner workings of a society are going to be tainted by these boundaries, whether or not the observer is aware of their existence.

Larry Barker compares the human communication system to one of its many electronic counterparts when he writes:

Just as in radio transmission, where distortion can occur at any point along the circuit (channel), there can be similar barriers in human communication. The source's information may be insufficient or unclear...The wrong channel of communication may be used...The message may not be decoded the way it was encoded...Finally the receiver may not be quipped to handle the decoded message in such a way as to produce the response expected by the source...Barriers also occur if the sender and receiver are not on the same wavelength (1984, p. 12).

For cross-societal communication to be effective both parties must be on the same wavelength. As each individual in question may be both sender and receiver throughout the course of a conversation, at least one party should understand the other's culture and values so they can effectively translate their message. The first party would communicate a thought or idea to the second party, who would pause to adjust the message for cultural differences, process the actual meaning of the message, respond to the message and filter this response to adhere to the cultural norms of the first party. This is a complicated communication arrangement that must be learned before it can be successful.

Proper communication between societies is vital in the establishment of a functional relationship, both business and personal (De Mente, 1996). Understanding the spoken and written language of another society does not always guarantee effective communication; enhanced communication skills established through an understanding of the culture and values of that society is the key to any successful cross-societal interaction.

### Summary of Chapter 2

In the preceding sections it has been revealed that there are two types of societies, individualist and collectivist. Each of these societies is formed of members with a shared set of beliefs and goals and held together by the subsystems of culture, value and institution. The cultural system promotes communication and understanding based on shared symbols, the value system sets acceptable limits for the behavior of a society's members based on their established beliefs of right and wrong and serves to regulate the amount of individualism and collectivism of its members. The institutional system provides a venue for the teaching and reinforcement of a society's culture and values from generation to generation. Institutions shape the individual and can include the family, neighborhood, school, youth groups, workplace, living community and religious establishments.

All members of a society, whether it is collectivistic or individualistic, have unique personalities that provide diversity among the thoughts, ideas and beliefs of its population and renders the administration of any absolute label pertaining to a society's "type" invalid. Conclusions about the nature and functioning of societies and their members must be done as a generalization at the macro level with the understanding that they may not apply to individual interaction at the micro level. Enhanced communication skills based on an understanding of the



culture, values and institutions are necessary to overcome the difficulties presented by the differences in a society's members and to allow various societies to function together on a personal or business level in the global environment.

## CHAPTER 3

### INDICATORS OF SOCIETAL AFFILIATIONS

The enhanced communication skills necessary for the establishment of effective cross-societal relationships can only be achieved via a thorough understanding of each type of society and its view on its place in the global market. In order to understand the factors which motivate both collectivistic and individualistic societies it is necessary to explore their origins and the point at which the two began to diverge. Hofstede speculated that the differences in the two societies may be linked to their agricultural roots, stating that:

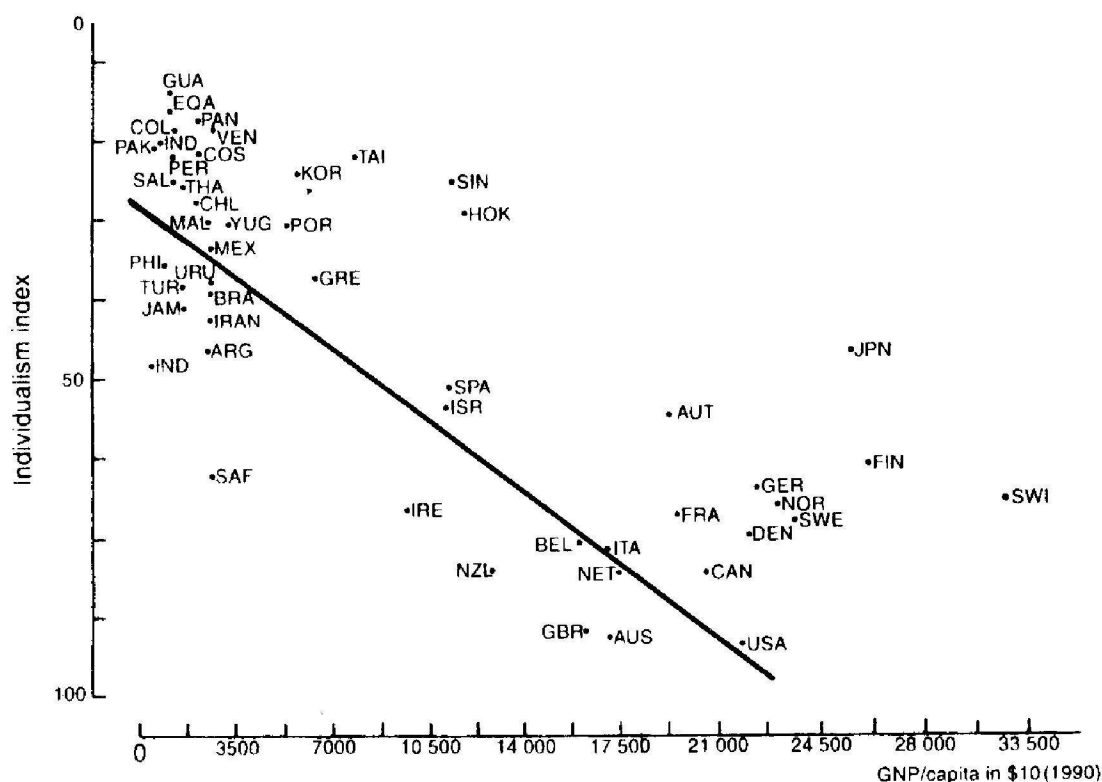
Hunter-gatherers tend to live in nuclear families or small bands. Sedentary agricultural societies mostly show complex extended families or village community in-groups. When farmers migrate to cities the sizes of extended families become reduced and the typical urban family is again nuclear...modernization corresponds to individualism (Hofstede, 1997, p. 74).

As societies have become increasingly bent on technological pursuits and have turned away from their agrarian roots they have become progressively individualistic, a change that has been linked to the greater opportunity for personal advancement to be found in a modern, urban environment. This view has been repeatedly contested, however, by those who state that it is a society's pre-existing view on individualism that sets the stage for further advancement and inclines its members for entrepreneurial pursuits (Lee, 2000, p. 401).

Hofstede's writings also suggest that a correlation exists between the degree of individualism in a country and its current Gross National Product, supporting the influence of modernization on societal tendencies. Gress also supported this viewpoint, stating that "individualism was not merely an impulse to well being, a psychological state, but also the

sociological result of modernization” (1998, p. 326). Hofstede’s data could lead researchers to conclude that countries with a higher GNP will always possess more individualistic tendencies than their poorer neighbors; however, it is interesting to note that collectivist societies founded on Confucian and other Eastern Beliefs at no point exceed the halfway mark on Hofstede’s “Individualism Index” (shown in Figure 2), regardless of their GNP. Even Japan, which has a higher GNP per capita than the United States falls slightly under 50% at 46% (p. 53).

Figure 2 1970 IDV Scores Versus 1990 GNP/Capita for 50 Countries



A society’s political structure is often considered as a third indicator of its individualistic tendencies. A collectivistic society is considered to be a “system under which ownership and control of the means of producing and distributing goods are in the hands of the people

collectively” (Webster’s II, 1984, p. 139). In such societies the government has a greater tendency toward Communistic control and a socialist system. Countries with greater individualistic tendencies err toward Democratic governments that allow its members a greater degree of freedom and independence.

Again, the assumption of individualistic of collectivist traits based on politics is an oversimplification of the dynamics of a nation’s culture and does not allow for the micro level considerations of culture, value and institutional systems. Furthermore, a society’s political system may be forced upon it by a conquering military power rather than by personal choice, marking its politics as being directly opposite its social tendencies. Further examination of specific societies will demonstrate the complexity of the relationship between a political system and individualistic and collectivistic traits.

In Table 1 below Hofstede categorizes some of the differences between individualist and collectivist societies from a political and ideological perspective. These differences provide a starting point for classification when considered in conjunction with various micro level indicators.



Table 1 Key Differences Between Collectivist and Individualist Societies.

## II: Politics and Ideas

Collectivist	Individualist
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collective interests prevail over individual interests.</li> <li>• Private life is invaded by group(s)</li> <li>• Opinions are predetermined by group membership.</li> <li>• Laws and rights differ by group.</li> <li>• Low per capita GNP</li> <li>• Dominant role of the state in the economic system.</li> <li>• Economy based on collective interests.</li> <li>• Political power exercised by interest groups.</li> <li>• Press controlled by the state.</li> <li>• Imported economic theories largely irrelevant because unable to deal with collective and particularistic interests.</li> <li>• Ideologies of equality prevail over ideologies of individual freedom.</li> <li>• Harmony and consensus in society are ultimate goals.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual interests prevail over collective interests.</li> <li>• Everyone has right to privacy.</li> <li>• Everyone is expected to have a private opinion.</li> <li>• Laws and rights are supposed to be the same for all.</li> <li>• High per capita GNP.</li> <li>• Restrained role of the state in the economic system.</li> <li>• Economy based on individual interests.</li> <li>• Political power exercised by voters.</li> <li>• Press freedom.</li> <li>• Native economic theories based on pursuit of individual self-interests.</li> <li>• Ideologies of individual freedom prevail over ideologies of equality.</li> <li>• Self-actualization by every individual is an ultimate goal.</li> </ul>

In the interest of maintaining its equilibrium between chaos and stagnation a society will present a mixture of traits from both sides of this diagram, demonstrating that collectivism and individualism must work in harmony in order for a society to function effectively.

Further breakdown of the characteristics of an individualistic and collectivistic society was made by Hofstede from the point of view of the institutional vehicles that pass cultural mores and beliefs from generation to generation. Table 2 reveals general norms and values reinforced by the



institutions of family, education, the workplace and the general environment that can further be used to identify a society's predisposition toward individualism or collectivism.

Table 2 Key Differences between Collectivist and Individualist Societies.

I: General Norm, Family, School, and Workplace

Collectivist	Individualist
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People are born into extended families or other in-groups which continue to protect them in exchange for loyalty.</li> <li>• Identity is based in the social network to which one belongs.</li> <li>• Children learn to think in terms of 'we'</li> <li>• Harmony should always be maintained and direct confrontations avoided.</li> <li>• High-context communication.</li> <li>• Trespassing leads to shame and loss of face for self and group.</li> <li>• Purpose of education is learning how to do.</li> <li>• Diplomas provide entry to higher status groups.</li> <li>• Relationship employer-employee is perceived in moral terms, like family link.</li> <li>• Hiring and promotion decisions take employees' in-group into account</li> <li>• Management is management of groups.</li> <li>• Relationship prevails over task.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Everyone grows up to look after him/herself and his/her immediate (nuclear) family only.</li> <li>• Identity is based in the individual.</li> <li>• Children learn to think in terms of 'I'</li> <li>• Speaking one's mind is a characteristic of an honest person.</li> <li>• Low-context communication.</li> <li>• Trespassing leads to guilt and loss of self-respect.</li> <li>• Purpose of education is learning how to learn.</li> <li>• Diplomas increase economic worth and/or self-respect.</li> <li>• Relationship employer-employee is a contract supposed to be based on mutual advantage.</li> <li>• Hiring and promotion decision are supposedly based on skills and rules only.</li> <li>• Management is management of individuals.</li> <li>• Task prevails over relationship.</li> </ul>

When determining a society's "type" it is important to evaluate these differences, both external and internal, as they relate to the society's infrastructure and with consideration to the micro level personality differences of its members. As with other methods of classification there

will be no absolutes, requiring individuals to think outside of these established boundaries in order to form successful cross-societal relations.

### Summary of Chapter 3

Numerous indicators exist by which to determine tendency of a particular society toward individualism or collectivism, and these indicators have been cataloged in depth by researchers such as Hofstede and Gress. It is essential that individuals seeking to pursue cross-societal relations understand that the very nature of society's infrastructure ensures that there is no way to use absolutes when labeling a particular society. Its political and economic base may serve as strong indicators, as history has shown nations which are increasingly modernized and have a higher GNP display greater individualistic tendencies than those with a Communistic government; however, the frequency throughout history with which political systems have been spread via military force considered with the individual personalities of a society's members renders it essential that diplomats consider societies on the micro level before making a presumptive classification.

## CHAPTER 4

### A LOOK AT THE COUNTRIES STUDIED

#### The Czech Republic

With the presence of flintstone and campfires as early as 250,000 B.C. found in an area north of Prague, the Czech Republic can be described as a new country with an old history (Dementz, 1997, p. 6). Created in 1993 as a result of the relatively amicable and peaceful split with Slovakia, with whom it had formed the country Czechoslovakia since the end of the First World War, the nation that comprises the Czech Republic dates its beginning back to the before the first millennium of the common era (Holy, 1996). As a sovereign state, however, its history has been fragmented. It was part of the Habsburg Empire from the sixteenth century until the Treaty of Versailles gave it joint sovereignty in a multiethnic state. Between the two wars, the fledgling Czechoslovakia was the only one of the newly liberated states to maintain a democratic form of government until its surrender to Nazi Germany in the earliest stages of World War II (Holy, 1996; Fawn, 2000).

Liberation from Nazi Germany brought to Czechoslovakia a new kind of occupation as it became one of the Eastern European Soviet satellites. An independent state in name and outward forms of government, the country was ruled by Soviet Communism, enforced by the power of the Soviet military, until its “velvet revolution” (Fawn, 2000; Holy, 1996) toppled the regime in the fall of 1989. Saul Estrin describes the effect of communism on Czechoslovakian society as thus:

Because communists viewed society as composed of classes rather than individuals, individualistic activity was inherently suspicious... Thus collective



consumption was acceptable and even desirable; except in obvious cases like food or clothing, private consumption was individualistic and potentially on the slippery path back to capitalism (1994, p. 58).

Two key factors must be noted about the imposition of Communism on the Czechoslovakian state. First, Czechoslovakia was one of the only places in post-War World II Eastern/Central Europe in which free elections were actually held and in which the Communists actually won a sizable number of seats in the government with 38 percent of the vote. Second, collectivization in Czechoslovakia and the transformation of private property into public property took place much more quickly and much more thoroughly than in any of the other European satellites. The underlying factor for the ease of this transition can be traced back in Czechoslovakia's history; when the Habsburgs crushed the last Czech nationalist uprising at the Battle of White Mountain in 1620 the nobility that supported their cause were rewarded with vast quantities of land. Some of this land was confiscated and returned to "the people" in the interwar period, almost as soon as the new Czechoslovak state was created (Holy 121); the Communists engaging in collectivization used the rhetoric of "fixing" the injustice of White Mountain to promote and explain their actions (Holy, 1996, p.37).

Between 1989 and 1991 the Communist regimes in Eastern Europe fell. Some, such as Hungary, underwent a bloody revolution; others took months of protracted negotiations between the Soviet-sanctioned regime in power and the pro-democracy dissident forces. The change of power in Czechoslovakia took place over the course of a few days, with little conflict and only one major violent altercation (Fawn, 2000). This "Velvet Revolution" took place following the arrest of Vaclav Havel in January 1989 for his participation in the commemoration of the death of



Jan Palach<sup>2</sup> and his subsequent election as President of the Federal Assembly the following December.

### Sweden

Located in the northernmost point of Europe with Scandinavian neighbors Norway and Finland, Sweden has played a unique and fascinating role in international history. Its ancestors, the Vikings, are now widely credited with being the first Europeans to truly reach and establish colonies on the New World in present day Iceland, Greenland and North America (Weibull, 1993).

Sweden has a population of 8.6 million, more than 85 percent of which currently resides in its more temperate southern portions (a situation similar to the United States' northern neighbor, Canada). Like many other industrialized countries Sweden's population is currently experiencing a low birth rate, with its net immigration of 700,000 citizens accounting for more than half of its population growth over the last century.

Although geographically considered a part of the European continent, its division from the mainland by the Baltic Sea has served to remove it from many of the conflicts sweeping through Europe in recent years. (References to "down in Europe" are prevalent in Swedish discussions of the developments on the continent of which they are part) (e.g. Svensson, 1987, p. 100). Sweden did, however, play an important part in the religious Reformation that swept Europe in the wake of Martin Luther, and many Swedish soldiers and military leaders became infamous for the role they played in the 30-Year War (Weibull, 1993).

Understanding Sweden's social, political and economic situation in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries requires an understanding of "the history of ideas in Sweden" (Svensson, 1987, p. 100).

Here the conflict between tradition and progress, humanism and religion, freedom of inquiry and respect of the sacred is most evident. Ramism, the attempt by Swedish scholar Pierre de la Ramee to unite humanism with Protestantism, swept through the country until its eventual replacement by a strict Lutheran orthodoxy, which gave way to a return to Neo-Aristotelianism, the revival of Hermetic philosophy by NeoPlatonists, and its subsequent struggle against Cartesian determinism. By the 17<sup>th</sup> century the result of these debates was Christian Wolff's "Wolffianism," which can perhaps be considered the first original Swedish philosophy:

Wolff, combining Aristotle's teleology with the man-centered humanistic outlook and the Protestant conception of divinity, held that the purpose of the world is to glorify God. Man's creative work realizes this aim, benefiting people and society while honoring the Lord. Individual gain and collective utility alike were thus given legitimacy ... (Svensson, 1987, p. 105).

Further, writes Svensson, "With its positive view of humanity and its extroverted values, it was a proper Enlightenment philosophy, yet couched in sufficiently weak terms to be accepted by the lingering orthodoxy" (1987, p. 105). It was later superseded by a Swedish reworking of the natural justice philosophies as articulated by Hobbes and others on the continent, and then by a Swedish version of the German humanism and romanticism, following the paths of, respectively, Kant and Hegel. At the same time, the reality of 19<sup>th</sup> century industrialism and modern capitalism trickled in alongside radical ideas from the left.

Throughout this time, Sweden remained a monarchy, and power was effectively held by the king (although tempered by a prime minister and semi-elected representatives) until World War I. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century it experienced rapid industrialization and related cultural change but never developed a "powerful Marxist opposition" (Svensson, 1987, p. 111). This often comes as a surprise to those familiar with the extent by which socialism pervaded in Swedish life and

government; however, it naturally follows the extensive local naturalization and adaption of European philosophies and movements throughout Swedish history.

The early 20<sup>th</sup> century opened in Sweden with a demand for universal suffrage under the motto, “one man, one rifle, one vote” (Weibull, 1993, p. 112). The Social Democratic Party won its first parliamentary election in 1914 and has remained the dominant party in the Swedish multi-party system ever since, although in the late 1980s and early 1990s it was occasionally unable to form majority governments. Sweden’s modern parliamentary history, incidentally, is characterized by coalition governments—usually the Social Democrats with the Communists (later renamed the New Left Party); less frequently and more recently, the Liberals collaborating with the Center and the Christian Democratic parties.

Sweden managed to remain neutral during both world wars, despite pressure from the Germans, the then Soviets and the Allied forces. The impact of the Depression was almost as dramatic as in the United States following World War I; however, Sweden recovered more quickly by beginning to build, prior to World War II, *folk-hemmet* (the people’s home), the welfare state for which it is so famous today (Weibull, 1993, p. 123). War events and Sweden’s continued machinations to remain outside the conflict, yet free to give aid to its victims, concentrated power in the government’s hands. From 1945 to 1951 the Social Democratic government effected reform after reform, implementing old age pensions, child allowances, subsidies to higher education, and a steeply progressive income tax. A second wave of reforms, this time targeted at Sweden’s educational system, followed in the 1960s.

Sweden experienced strong economic growth in the 1950s and 1960s, a halting of this growth in the late 1970s, and an end to the growth in the 1980s, accompanied by a (albeit brief)



return to more right-wing politics. Today Sweden is a wealthy country, with a strong social welfare system, publicly funded health care and education, and considerable involvement by the government in many aspects of the economy and daily life.

### Greece

Greece has enjoyed a rich and diverse history. The country itself is located on the beautiful Mediterranean and boasts a population of over 11 million with an immigration population of approximately 10 percent, the majority of which is focused in and around the major urban centers.

The precise date of its original settlement is undetermined; however, researchers have found evidence of settlements on the island dating back to the Neolithic period in 6000 BC. The Bronze Age and the Minoan Age showed the continuing development in art and architecture for which Greece would later be lauded, but it was the Mycenaean Age in which the Mycenaean civilization defeated the Minoans to take control of the city of Troy and become the dominant civilization in all of Greece for which Greece is most well known. (It was this time period that established the background for the Greek myths and heroes).

The fourth century BC ushered in the Hellenistic Age, which would become known as “the age of the Greeks.” Indeed, Greece still refers to itself as a Hellenistic society. It was during the Hellenistic Age that Philip of Macedon came to power, ousting the king (his infant nephew) and expanding his borders until he controlled all of Greece with the exception of Sparta. Philip launched an attack on the Persian Empire which eventually led to his demise but brought his son, Alexander the Great, onto the throne.

Alexander became known as the man who conquered the world for his systematic defeat of the Persian army, which controlled the majority of Asia Minor, the Middle East, Mesopotamia,



Egypt and Iran. It was his army that actively exported Greek culture throughout what was then the known world and set the stage for the tremendous influence it would have on the cultures that would follow.

Among the most noteworthy qualities of the Grecian people is the endurance of their culture and language:

“...from our own era: 330, 1204, 1687, 1823, 1826, 1832, 1912, 1916, 1940, 1941, 1943, 1967. Every one of these (and many more could be supplied) represents an historical defeat for the Greeks – whether by the Romans, the Crusaders, the Ottoman Turks, the Germans, or internal military coups...To speak of the Greek nation is to speak of a people with painful memories; victims of genocide and fratricide both” (Rawlins, 1997, p. 13).

Following Alexander’s death his empire fell apart, and the ensuing years were times of great controversy and strife for the people of Greece. The blending of cultures should have destroyed (or at least altered) some of the Grecian culture; its continued ability to thrive, as evidenced by the fact that the people of Greece are still able to refer to themselves as a Hellenistic people rather than by the title of their conquerors, is a testament to the hardy endurance of the Greek nation.

Fast forwarding to more recent history, Greek once again entered into conflict in World War I, joining with Russia, the United States, France, Great Britain and Italy to form the Allied forces. After the war Prime Minister Venizelos sent his forces to liberate the large Greek population at Izmir. The refugees from this attack placed an incredible amount of strain on Greece’s borders, leading to the establishment of the first shanty towns in and around its major cities and rallying support for the Communist Party among the general population.

In 1936 King George II, son of Constantine I, appointed Minister of War General Metaxas Prime Minister. Metaxas established a firmly fascist dictatorship; however, he was opposed to the

utter domination of Germany and refused to allow Italian troops to cross Greece. The country fell to Germany in 1941. In the face of mass starvation numerous Resistance movements were launched which eventually divided into Royalist and Communist factions. The two factions waged a bloody civil war until the Royalist victory in 1949.

Rather than bringing peace to the country the end of the civil war spurred a group of army colonels to stage what was said to be the “first successful military putsch on the European continent” in 1967. They inflicted horrific acts of brutality on the people of Greece, attempting the assassination of Archbishop Makarios that would spar Turkey’s invasion and subsequent occupation of northern Cyprus. Relations between Turkey and Greece remain strained to this day.

Greece currently boasts a parliamentary republic, headed by Costas Karamanlis and his conservative Nea Dimokratia party; however, economic tensions among the population have set the stage for a potential shift in the next election.

### China

Like Greece, China enjoys a long history dating back to the beginning of human civilization. From its conception China was a feudal society, patriarchal in nature and ruled absolutely by the Emperor. Imperial China was governed by the teachings of the sage Confucius, a system of moral, social and political guidelines that served to establish the boundaries within which society could operate in the same manner as early religion in many other ancient civilizations. Indeed, Confucianism would come to be considered the state religion of Imperial China.

Sun Yat-sen, known throughout history as “The Father of the Republic”, introduced democracy to China through the establishment of the Chinese Republic in 1912. Yat-sen built his revolution on the platforms of nationalism, democracy and equalization, western principles that

would come to be considered the Three People's Principles of his new society. Despite his recognition of the need to effect change to the government of Imperial China in stages he continued to face conflict from those loyal to the Emperor, and enlisted the aid of Yuan Shikai to negotiate the abdication of the Emperor.

Shikai was successful in his overthrow-a little too successful, as he then declared himself Emperor and wrested control away from Sun Yat-sen. He was unable to maintain control of the outer reaches of China, however, and China was ripped apart by competing warlords for centuries under the governing abilities of the Nationalist Party until Mao Tse-Tung (known among the western world as Mao Zedong) and the establishment of the People's Republic of China.

The development of the People's Republic of China marked the beginning of Communistic control in post-revolutionary China. Mao extended the socialist principles of Communism and equality, many of which were founded in the teachings of Yat-sen and Confucius, to the general population. Lands not already owned were nationalized and distributed among the people. Collective farms were established, private enterprise was abolished and the government underwent a tremendous political and administrative centralization.

Ironically, it was Tse-Tung who first introduced the concept of women's rights to China. Prior to the establishment of the People's Republic of China women were governed by their fathers, husbands and sons. 93 percent of the female population was unemployed, and 90 percent were illiterate. Tse Tung insisted on giving women equal rights, stating that, "Women would hold up half the sky." His government launched the Marriage Law and Land Law in 1950 that gave women the right to file for divorce and own land, forcing men to take on an equal share of the domestic burden.



These laws were not widely received. Women continued to be terrorized by their husband's families, and women who attempted to leave an unhappy marriage were the victims of physical abuse and, in some cases, murder. The socialist party launched a new campaign encouraging a return to traditional values, setting the women's liberation movement aside in favor of societal harmony and the safety and well-being of its citizens.

In the late 1970s Deng Xiaoping began incorporating the industrial and economic reforms that would be later credited for China's economic success. Economic concerns rather than political governed society, and the decollectivization of farms and other national properties went into effect. The 1980s saw a period of intense economic growth which was continued under the leadership of Jiang Zemin, the third president of the People's Republic. Zemin was best known for re-embracing private enterprise in the late 1990s, bringing communist China into the global marketplace.

The numerous changes in government and politics have led China to be a fragmented society with a tenuous control over its government. Kenneth Lieberthal and David Lampton state that China is directed under a "fragmented authoritarianism" where "authority below the very peak of the Chinese political system is fragmented and disjointed." This disjointed fragmentation is present in all aspects of China's current society.

Standing on the Great Wall of China (see Figure 4) and looking out over the mountains it is easy to be swept away by this timeless testament to humanity; however, in the wake of the destruction of the Great Wall and the presence of what is becoming the 6 year marvel of hundreds of buildings springing to life in Shanghai (see Figure 3) the sharp contrast of old and new is readily apparent and raises the question in the minds of many the impact that this change will have on China's intrinsic societal framework.



The same underlying values that inspired the building of the Great Wall are driving a nation to create a new Shanghai as well as a market socialist economy for China. Has the communist government actually reformed the underlying values that drive the society or have they simply become yet another “emperor ruled” dynasty in China’s vast history?

Figure 3 New Construction in Shanghai

Rapid construction in Shanghai as viewed from the 14<sup>th</sup> floor of the Park Hotel. Photo taken in 1998 by David Marciniszyn.



Figure 4 The Great Wall Winds Around a Mountain Pass

The Great Wall as it appeared from an alcove prior to its destruction. Photo taken in 1998 by David Marciniszyn.



## CHAPTER 5

### THE INFLUENCE OF THE FAMILY

#### The Role of Family in the Czech Republic

It is impossible to discuss the “traditional” or “normal” family life of the Czechs without considering the rather un-normal differentiation between the public and private spheres of life as fostered by the five decades of Communism. Anthropologist Ladislaus Holy, born in Czechoslovakia and living in the United Kingdom since his exile from his homeland in 1968, describes it thus:

The boundary between public and private spheres was... marked by the clear distinction between the people with whom one interacted in each sphere. The co-actors in the public sphere were typically co-workers, officials, those who provided the necessary services, and the general public; in the private sphere they were relatives and friends. The overlap between these two categories of co-actors was minimal ... (Holy, 1996, p.21).

Official Communist doctrine was aimed at strengthening collective forms of living and effectively strengthening and building relationships within the public sphere regardless of the cost to those both personal and private. State propaganda stressed loyalty to society and the state over loyalty to friends and family; however, the punitive nature of the state (“the omnipresent lie of the state,” as one Czech dissident put it (Holy, 1996, p. 23)) sparked an official but unenthusiastic participation in the collective activities required by the public sphere and intensified the experience, friendships, bonds, and trust within the private sphere.

As a result, the overall effect of Communism on the Czech Republic was to further strengthen close family relationships at home rather than driving them farther apart. Despite the provisions of the social welfare system it was still at home that care and nurturing took place, and



it was often only at home that truth could be spoken. This added dimension of security, eventually encouraged by the Communist government as part of the post-Prague Spring normalization, made the domestic relationship almost sacrosanct. The increasingly poor state of the economy and resulting shortages of goods and materials made providing for the material well-being of the family crucial; the theft of “socialist” property was not considered theft at all, as evidenced by the widespread Czech saying, “Anyone who does not steal is robbing his family” (Holy, 1996, p.25).

Unlike the United States, the nuclear family is not considered the basic unit of family. Extended families and multi-generational families often live together in close quarters, a rural living trend that continued through the urbanization of Czech society as a result of chronic housing shortages during Communism. Help and aid between different branches of the family is not just important, it is expected:

It is appropriate for parents to care about their children and for children to care about their ageing parents; it was appropriate to help others in the domestic group and to expect their help; it was appropriate to be courteous to one another in the private sphere; and it was particularly expected that the young would be courteous to the old and that the able-bodied would take care of the old, the ill, and the otherwise incapacitated (Holy, 1996, p. 20).

In Czech society, blood was—and is—certainly thicker than water and more important than laws and requirements or demands of outside society. But does this tight family bond in a society make it collective?

Merry White (1993) showcases the vehicle for the reinforcement of individualism in the American society when she writes that “the American mother sees her newborn as a dependent being, needing to be trained to be independent” (Japanese Business, p. 173). White further asserts that “Americans miss much in support, security and continuity, characteristics of a society based not on the individual but on the community...the emphasis in the United States on freedom of



choice, individualism (however that may be institutionalized), and mobility (among other cultural options) leads Americans to certain family dynamics” (Japanese Business, p. 182).

Czech family dynamics are different; dependence on families, including cohabitation, continues well into adulthood. The need for independence at an early age is not a considering factor, encouraging parents to foster lasting bonds with their children rather than striving to breed in them the independence to leave the nest as early as possible.

The gender relations within the family are also different, with the majority of Czech families continuing to display strong patriarchal tendencies that were rendered obsolete in many American households with the women’s liberation movement. Fawn (2000) notes the continued low numbers of women in Czech politics and other positions of power, while Holy provides evidence from modern Czech women themselves that suggest they embrace many of the roles their American counterparts reject as stereotypes. For example, “guardian of the hearth,” “man’s partner for all seasons,” and “mother” were all embraced by the vast majority of Czech women polled as desirable labels (Holy, 1996, p.178). Moreover, he reports that in conversations with Czech women, he found them frequently stressing the opposing but complementary roles of the sexes, voicing the opinion that the ability to/experience of childbearing was responsible for many of the differences between men and women.

It is interesting that one of the first acts of the post-Communist Czechoslovak government was to abolish celebrations of International Women’s Day, which celebrated women as workers, and reinstate Mother’s Day as a national holiday (Holy, 1996). Czech society places a high premium on motherhood, domesticity, and the family, and gender relationships are more about cooperation and mutual benefit than autonomy or dominance of any particular sex. As Holy

describes, “Czech gender politics is aimed not altering existing gender relations but at better employing existing gender differences for the benefit of society” (1996, p. 180).

On the whole, the evidence of Czech family relations tends to support collectivism. The first in Hofstede’s differentiation between collectivist and individualist societies, seen in Table 2, is that in collectivist societies, “people are born into extended families or other in-groups which continue to protect them in exchange for loyalty” (Hofstede, 1997, p. 67). As Hofstede explains,

Obligations to the family in a collectivist society are not only financial but also ritual. Family celebrations like baptisms, marriages, and, especially, funerals are extremely important and should not be missed. Expatriate managers from individualistic societies are often surprised by the family reasons given by employees from a collectivist host society who apply for a special leave; the expatriates think they are being fooled but most likely the reasons are authentic (Hofstede, 1997, p. 59).

The strong focus on family and the traditional roles of men and women in the family unit exemplify the fact that among the Czech Republic the predominate concentration is on the maintenance of the family unit as a whole rather than its separation and individualization. Any country attempting to establish cross-societal relations would need to first understand and respect this collectivistic viewpoint.

### The Role of Family in Sweden

As mentioned earlier, urbanization and the nuclear family are both relatively new concepts to the Swedes; however, they appear to have had a profound effect on the individualistic and collectivist traits displayed by society. The first trait of a collectivistic society as set forth by Hofstede is that “people are born into extended families or other in-groups which continue to protect them in exchange for loyalty.” In Sweden, as in the United States, the primary focus is on the maintenance of the nuclear family; children grow up to be independent of their parental units,



and when they begin their own family their responsibility is solely to their nuclear family rather than its extended branches. Moreover, the connection within this nuclear family is weak.

Svensson asserts, “Children gain early independence from their parents and the emphasis for them is on fitting in with their peer groups, rather than with their families...Parental supervision and involvement are not as important here as in many other countries” (Svensson, 2000, p. 47).

Svensson further stresses the individualistic tendencies of the average Swedish family by stating:

There is not very much interaction between the generations, and while some pensioners will help with baby-sitting, and some children will help care for their aged parents, for the most part they get together only on holidays and for family celebrations. This is similar to the situation in many Western countries, but the division is perhaps sharper in Sweden because the state has been so willing to step in and help (2000, p. 50).

With an eye to the core family relationship Sweden appears to be strongly individualistic, providing a common platform of communication from which other societies may approach them. Sweden’s individualism, however, remains strongly tempered by collectivistic boundaries; “independence without disruption” presents a common theme. In a truly individualistic society, “speaking one’s mind is a characteristic of an honest person” (Hofstede, 1997, p.67). This honesty often comes at the expense of general harmony; however, Giordano, McGoldrick and Pearce reveal that Scandinavian families have difficulty in “expressing emotions; whose fights usually are not overt; who stress independence and figuring concerns out on one’s own without calling attention to oneself” (1996, p. 604). Giordano, McGoldrick and Pearce also cite an example of the struggle for independence without disruption to society or the family when they write that “parents attempt to control their children because of the shame that acting-out children bring to the family by drawing attention to themselves and to the family” (1996, p. 604).

This temperance reveals what may be considered a “split personality” of Swedish society pertaining to individualistic and collectivistic traits, indicating that Sweden’s balance between the two poles has been found through a successful blending of individualistic ideals and collectivistic mores which allows individual expression without sacrificing the harmony and well being of society as a whole. The social network, especially of peers, is considered equally important to the individual. Children appear to be taught to think both in terms of a medium “I” and a medium “we,” but harmony is clearly preferable to honesty.

### The Role of Family in Greece

“The basic social unit in Greece is the family (ikoyenia), which has strong patriarchal control and deeply binding extended kinships” (Giordano, McGoldrick & Pearce, 1996, p 518). If any country can be said to personify the collectivistic view of family it is Greece, within which the family is the core of society. Rawlins concurs with the above analysis when he writes that, “Greece holds...an uncommon sense of communal togetherness. Of strong family values – in Greece, no less than other countries: ‘blood is thicker than water’ (to aimia nero dev ginetai) – to openness to each other, of personal honor, courtesy and respect” (Rawlins, 1997, p. 24).

In the Greek family gender based cultural roles are very specific. “The husband (is expected to be) a...provider and...the wife is faithful and obedient to him and to her children” (Giordano, McGoldrick & Pearce, 1996, p 519). “Any departure from expected social norms – for example a public display of superiority by the wife – puts her at risk for severe reproach, including physical abuse” (Giordano, McGoldrick & Pearce, 1996, p 520).

Despite the fact that the family hierarchy is primarily a patriarchal one the mother has a significant role in the formation of a child’s value system. “...the traditional Greek mother is



entrusted with the care of the children and the maintenance of the Greek language, customs, and values in the family...In the home, where family issues are decided, the father and the children look to the mother for guidance” (Giordano, McGoldrick & Pearce, 1996, p 520). The special connection between mother and son is revealed by Rawlins when he describes Greece as a “physically demonstrative society...Mothers kiss adoringly their teenage sons, who respond with deep affection, even fondling them in public” (Rawlins, 1997, p. 69).

Greek mothers have historically had an excessive amount of ambition for their male children, encouraging them to exceed the status and positions obtained by their fathers and secure their own place in society. “...the son is not expected to succeed his father, but to exceed him” (Giordano, McGoldrick & Pearce, 1996, p 521). “Boys...will carry the family name – so nothing is too good for them” (Fiada, 1994, p. 18). On a more personal level, “The strong alliance between a mother and her male child may be construed as an effort to develop an alliance that will offset her disadvantaged position with her husband and possibly improve her situation when her son is older and has more power” (Giordano, McGoldrick & Pearce, 1996, p 521).

To gain a better understanding of family dynamics in Greece and the role played by its women I took the opportunity during the course of my visit to speak with the wife of one of my classmates. Her family was Greek, and throughout the course of our conversation she provided me with several enlightening second hand insights into the treatment of women in the Greece’s booming professional society.

She told me that a female executive she was acquainted with had a difficult time managing the men in her group, stating that “the person who she knew could not even think about going out socially with the office group since she would lose the respect that she had taken so long in

building up among her co-workers.” Women have long taken a secondary role to their men, a position cemented by the traditional belief that “most women (do) not work outside the home, except in the family business. Since women’s place in Greek culture has traditionally been defined in terms of their relationships to men, it follows that if a man’s wife, daughter, or sister had to work, it reflected poorly on his ability to provide and protect them” (Giordano, McGoldrick & Pearce, 1996, pp. 517-518). Further, “the wife is not to make many demands of her husband and is to give love without expecting reciprocity. It is also expected that interpersonal conflicts will be resolved without discussion, usually through the wife’s submission to the husband’s wishes” (Giordano, McGoldrick & Pearce, 1996, p 519).

The submissive role played by women in society is strongly reinforced by the Greek Orthodox Church, in which women “are not given any leadership or power and remain relegated to the roles of fund-raising or caretaker” (Giordano, McGoldrick & Pearce, 1996, p 519). I had the opportunity to view this feminine subservience firsthand when interacting with Nikos, a Greek native, and his fiancée Helen. Even though Helen retained a better grasp on the English language she did not translate openly for him; rather, she would whisper translations to him and otherwise maintain an unobtrusive presence unless specifically drawn into the conversation by Nikos himself. She served to support but did not take the dominant role of translator, allowing the illusion of superiority to stay with her fiancé and reinforcing his position of male superiority.

Rawlins reveals additional family dynamics between parents and children when he contrasts Russia to Greece and writes that, “in Russia...children are all but ignored until they achieve adulthood, when they become the darlings of their parents. In Greece ... the opposite (occurs): they are loved and cosseted to distraction throughout childhood, but once adulthood is

reached they lose that special treatment and show evidence of trauma in so doing” (Rawlins, 1997, p. 69).

Despite the allusion given by this quote children retain a strong bond with their parents well into adulthood, as supported by Fiada when she writes that, “Relations with parents are very rarely severed, no matter what, nor do they decline to the polite acquaintance level so common elsewhere” (1994, p. 18). She states that among Grecian families “even middle-aged bachelors, well established in their own flats, return almost daily to Mama for a well cooked meal and crisply-ironed shirts” (1994, p. 17). During the course of my stay in Greece Nikos was confronted by Florence Wisn, one of my classmates, on a personal matter. She jokingly stated, “I’ll tell your mother...” at which point she relayed that “Nikos looked genuinely horrified...”

Greeks also have an extended sense of family which extends out to include their society. This unquestioning inclusion is all but unheard of in strongly individualistic countries like the United States. Rawlins states that, “Their sense of *parea* – that circle of friends that continues throughout life, resumed spontaneously even if in disrepair – is largely foreign to the West. It is a means of great social cohesion – like family itself” (1997, p. 60). The role of society as extended family is used as a mechanism to combat rampant societal individualism by parents “falsely ascribe(ing) control or power over their children to people in socially sanctioned roles (e.g., “Behave yourself or the doctor will get angry”)” (Giordano, McGoldrick & Pearce, 1996, p 524).

While staying in Greece I had the pleasure to have a late dinner with Nikos, Helen, and Florence at a local restaurant. While we were waiting on the sidewalk to hail a cab, Nikos was approached by a young man. They exchanged words, and then Nikos took out his wallet and proceeded to give the man a few dollars. After the exchange Florence asked Nikos who the man



was and why he had given him money, acting on the assumption that the young man was a personal acquaintance.

Nikos tried to explain that the man needed money and had asked Nikos if he could spare any. Florence asked “Do you know him?” Nikos replied “No.” Florence, her curiosity peaked, responded “So he was a beggar and he might possibly be asking for money to buy drugs?” Nikos replied simply “Yes.”

When asked why he had given him money when his purpose was unclear Nikos, after briefly conferring with Helen for the proper translation, replied simply, “If I had not given him money, then he would have had to find another way to get the money. He might steal something or hurt someone.” Nikos was protecting himself, his girlfriend, his family and society as a whole by sharing his personal wealth with this man who was a total stranger to him.

Figure 5 Dinner in the Plaka

The Organizational Dynamics Participants dining in the Plaka in Athens. Photo taken in 1999 by David Marciniszyn





Rawlins explains the nature of Greek society and their interaction with their acquaintances, both intimate and casual, by stating that the Greek “wants to know everything about you. He has his secrets, his private affairs – and nothing will wring them from him if he is unwilling to do so. But on the whole he is much more outgoing than his northern neighbor, much more communal in his lifestyle, much less concerned at preserving social and superficial differences” (1997, p. 59).

In another nod to the extended boundaries of the Grecian family “Children are trained to pay attention to the person who is communicating a message rather than to the content of the message” (Giordano, McGoldrick & Pearce, 1996, p 520). This has an impact on community based relationships and how people interrelate since children learn to be “respectful and obedient to their elders regardless of the content of the communication, simply because I (the adult) said so” (Giordano, McGoldrick & Pearce, 1996, p 520). The power is removed from the parents to maintain sole control over their offspring and is extended to the community as a whole, breathing life into the old saying, “It takes a village to raise a child.”

The opinion of their community plays a large role in teaching children the boundaries of right and wrong, again removing the focus from the nuclear family and extending it to the community as a whole. “Some parents use deception and sarcasm to ensure that children are prepared for a treacherous world. Using phrases as “Shame on you” (*dropi*) and “What will people say?” (*ti tha ley o cosmos*) emphasize the importance of a person’s standing in the community and introduces the child to the importance of *philotimo*” (Giordano, McGoldrick & Pearce, 1996, p 524). It should be noted that “the overarching value of a family is to defend its *philotimo* (love of honor)” (Giordano, McGoldrick & Pearce, 1996, p 518). Fiada also describes the Greek quality of self-esteem when she writes that “*philotimo* is the value the Greeks hold most dear. It refers to self-esteem and love of honor, respect for one’s self and for others, a sense of fair play and duty. Usually, an appeal to it can make a Greek rise above the circumstances. A slight to the *philotimo*, though, is akin to the oriental loss of face: a serious offense, calling for satisfaction” (1994, p. 16).

Hofstede further expands on the concept of *philotimo*, writing:

“A concept bred in the collectivist family is face. ‘Losing face’, in the sense of being humiliated. The importance of face is the consequence of living in a society that is very conscious of social contexts. The languages of other collectivist cultures (as opposed to China) have words with more-or-less similar meanings. In Greece, for example, there is the word *philotimo*...A person is *philotimos* to the extent in which he conforms to the norms and values of his in-group...In the individualist society the counterpart characteristic is ‘self-respect’, but this again is defined from the point of view of the individual, whereas...‘*philotimo*’ (is) defined from the point of view of the social environment” (1991, p. 61).

Family is the core of Greek society, establishing firm collectivistic views which lay the foundation for the teaching of societal mores and values from generation to generation.

### The Role of Family in China

The Chinese cling very closely to a collectivistic view of family that echoes closely its Communistic roots. Jon P. Alston and Stephen Yongxin He illustrate the ongoing collectivism in the Chinese culture by stating that “reflecting the lack of individualism in Chinese culture, children are taught to place family interests over their own” (1997, p. 25).

The teachings of Confucianism define the individual in terms of a set of five “constant relationships” (Smith, 1991, p. 175). Smith describes these relationships as being between “parent and child, husband and wife, elder sibling and junior sibling, elder friend and junior friend, and ruler and subject” (p. 175). The individual is defined not by their individual achievements but by their place in the family, a title that could be extended to include the societal “in group” of a collectivistic society.

Alston and Yongxin He link Chinese culture to the family group in their statement, “Family considerations form the basis for most individual decisions: the family is the most important group membership among the Chinese. Reflecting the lack of individualism in Chinese culture, children are taught to place family interests over their own. Communist ideology influences the behavior of ordinary citizens less and less” (1997, p.25). Maintaining familial harmony and continuing to be a productive member of the family are key factors in the decision making processes of Chinese society.

Among the Chinese it is said that more family members under a single roof equals a more prosperous household. (Harper, 2005, p. 59) Adult children work and support their aging parents, who will in turn care for the younger members of the household. The nuclear family



comes into play, however, when considering a woman's position in society prior to and following her marriage.

The Chinese continue to maintain a very patriarchal society. Women go to live with their husband's family when they marry, often weakening the bonds between themselves and their own nuclear family in the process. Women are believed among the Chinese to be "The moon reflecting the sunlight"; in other words, their purpose is to reflect the greatness of their male counterparts. A woman in the home is subject to the will of first her father, then her husband, then finally her sons. Women in the business world, even executives, tend to fulfill more administrative roles than their western counterparts. Wilen-Daugenti notes that "To establish credibility, women have to work doubly hard to be technically prepared and culturally astute" (2007, p. 71).

Although this credibility can be obtained through hard work women continue to face mass discrimination in the work force, often looked over for jobs and placed first on the cutting block for unemployment due to the distaste of many Chinese employers for dealing with their family responsibility. The primary role of woman in Chinese society is that of mother and wife, and the family unit provides the hub upon which the rest of China turns.

Another example of the deeply rooted group orientation emerges when entering into a conversation on the sense of "face". John Bryan Starr discusses the meaning of face when he writes, "Students of the Chinese psyche conclude that Chinese people have a greater aversion to conflict and disorder than do Americans. And it is unquestionably true that finding oneself shamed in public-losing face-is for a Chinese person an experience to be avoided if at all possible" (1997, p. 76). DeMente states that the Chinese sense of face can be likened to a credit card. "The more "face" you have, the more you can buy with it... This respect for the feelings, especially as



manifested by “face-work”, is expected to hold society together and make it function harmoniously” (1996, p. 59).

The collectivistic mindset of Chinese society requires that its members feel very strongly about their position in society; society is, in their view, simply an extension of the family arm. Any action can bring either praise or damnation, not to the individual, but to the group as a whole. Alston and Yongxin He write that “the Chinese view foreign individuals as members of groups as well. Foreign guests in China who represent part of a delegation are treated by their Chinese hosts as members of that group rather than as individuals” (1997, p. 23).

The Chinese sense of face is deeply rooted custom brought about by the collective nature of their society and the need to protect that society by not “rocking the boat” and causing social disharmony. “As in Japan, conformity in China results in the group’s protection and care of its members. People do not prosper unless their groups prosper” (Alston & Yongxin He, 1997, p.22). The image of face can cause problems in international relations because the Chinese are “so sensitive to losing their own “face” or inflicting damage on the “face” of others that they have extreme difficulty in being candid and forthright in their dealings with others” (DeMente, 1997, p.59).

DeMente goes on to offer guidelines for individuals who find themselves in the awkward position of having to offend the Chinese sense of face by offering criticism. He writes “...it will not correct the situation, will make the individual angry and will most likely result in the person’s attempting to get revenge” (1997, p. 61). Alston and Yongxin He concur with this view, stating that “a foreigner should avoid criticizing the Chinese. Such behavior...makes that individual into a dangerous person” (1997, p. 11).

I had the opportunity to interact with the Chinese sense of face firsthand during my stay in China in 1998. The agenda for our trip was highly organized, and throughout the course of our time there was a constant sense of urgency to be on time and, if possible, to be early, even at the expense of having only a few minutes in the hotel to change upon arrival or freshen up after a meeting. Alston and Yongxin He write that “arriving early is considered a sign of respect, and gives face to the new acquaintance. Second, a person who is alone is seen as lonely and in need of company. This person, it is assumed, wants company and appreciates an early arrival” (1997, p. 20-21). This attitude made it very difficult for my classmates and myself by leaving us with little time to adjust to the jet lag; as a result, we found ourselves struggling with the full agenda over the course of our first few days as our bodies adjusted.

A second example of the importance of the Chinese sense of face is cited in an editorial from the *Philadelphia Inquire* (June 26, 1998) concerning President Clinton’s recent trip to China. The editorial stated that “Too often, Mr. Clinton has appeared to give in needlessly to Chinese wishes in planning his visit. With some ingenuity the President could have avoided the welcoming ceremony Tiananmen Square that his hosts pressed upon him. His China policy will fail without bipartisan support...if Mr. Clinton doesn’t pay his respects...at a sight that still haunts Americans and Chinese alike.” (Eisner, p. A22). The editor may have failed to realize that “a full schedule avoids the embarrassment of uncertainty, controls the behavior of the visitors and allows the Chinese to be good hosts” (Alston & Yongxin He, 1997, p. 15). By his refusal to omit the welcoming ceremony Clinton allowed his Chinese hosts to keep face.

Additionally, an article by Jennifer Lin and Steven Thomma (June 27, 1998) reveals that “Tiananmen Square is a sort of national front yard, a historic setting where leaders greet all

foreign dignitaries. The government refused to make an exception for Clinton” (p. A8). This refusal may have been rooted in the Chinese sense of “face”, since to give in to the request would be to cause national embarrassment. Despite the controversy over the events of Tiananmen Square that day it is not absolute that the Chinese would view President Clinton’s visit to be indicative of the situation being “swept under the rug” by the United States.

Lin & Thomma highlight the cultural differences in interpretation of this visit in their report of the sentiments of Zhang, a Chinese National. Zhang stated on the record that “What happened in Tiananmen Square was a Chinese affair. It didn’t have anything to do with America. Clinton shouldn’t get criticized...our government is the one that’s corrupt” (June 27, 1998, p. A8).

As mentioned before, the societal makeup of China maintains a strong echo of Confucian influence. Durlabhi explains the underpinnings of a Confucian society when he describes “Confucian thought” as “social harmony, and the central path to such harmony is the creation and maintenance of primary social relations at every level of society” (1993, p. 62). “Harmony (*wa*) is of paramount importance,” “*jen* signifies compassion,” and the *jen* connects to filial piety since “it is the primal bond between parents and children where the seeds of compassion are sown”. Therefore, in Confucian society “the state” can be “thought of as an enlarged family” (Durlabhi, 1993, p. 61). DeMente expressed a similar opinion when he wrote, “In Confucian ethics, the ideal family is one that follows the Five Principles: filial piety, fidelity, obedience, kindness, and loyalty to one’s superior” (1994, p. 116).

The strong orientation on group dynamics in Chinese society, both through the nuclear and extended family and that of their neighbors and associates, argues strongly for the continued



collectivistic orientation of the country. This collectivism is carefully paired with the individualistic tendencies of other micro-level operations to maintain the balance that keeps China functioning in the global marketplace.

### Summary of Chapter 5

Regardless of the society family plays an integral part in the teaching of mores and values from generation to generation. It is ultimately within the family that a society's boundaries are established. Families following the collectivistic pattern, such as those found in Greece, China and the Czech Republic, place the focus on the extended family and the community around them. Children maintain a close, healthy relationship with their parents and siblings long after they have grown. Families in individualistic nations such as Sweden and the United States focus primarily on the responsibilities and relationships of the nuclear family, with extended family playing a peripheral role in their lives and the relationship with the nuclear family slowly deteriorating over time as children gain their independence and go on to begin families of their own. The family relationship is a strong indicator with regard to a society's individualistic or collectivistic tendencies.



## CHAPTER 6

### THE INFLUENCE OF EDUCATION AND RELIGION

#### The Roles of Education and Religion in the Czech Republic

Czechs place a high value on education; their view of themselves as a nation of intellectuals is an important part of their national identity. The election of a poet and playwright as the first president of the post-Communist Czechoslovakia and then the separate Czech Republic was a matter of substantial national pride. The Post-Communist government's intellectual credentials, particularly as expressed in the person of President Vaclav Havel and contrasted with the (in popular opinion, at least) uncultured and unintellectual regime he replaced and the Post-Communist leaders of the other former satellites (e.g. the electrician and trade unionist Lech Walesa, the first Post-Communist president of Poland, who did not have a high school diploma), were frequently highlighted by commentators at home and abroad. Havel, then, becomes both a figurehead and a representation of Czech society. Holy states, "Looking at Havel, every Czech can say, "Are we not a nation of intellectuals? Just look at our president"" (Holy, 1996). Havel's individual achievement is cause for collective pride.

Hofstede differentiates between the educational systems of collectivistic and individualistic societies by stating that that in a collectivist society the purpose of education is learning *how to do* while in an individualist society, the purpose of education is learning *how to learn*. Furthermore, in a collectivist society diplomas provide entry to higher status groups while in an individualist one they increase economic worth or self-respect.

The application of the latter is perhaps best illustrated by Giordano and Colleagues' understanding of how education fits into the American way of life. "In American culture fulfillment comes from getting a good education, building a career, and serving one's own needs" (Giordano, McGoldrick & Pearce, 1996, p 525). In Czech society, both before, during, and post-Communism, university degrees meant entry into the intelligentsia. As in much of Europe, the idea behind higher education is to get an education rather than focusing on the student's career potential. (Holy, 1996).

Those who have gone through the Czech education system, particularly at the primary and secondary (K-12 in the U.S.) levels, report that it is conformist and authoritarian (personal correspondence and observation); however, it is not as absolute or authoritarian as, for example that in Chinese society, which provides a strong collective example concerning the role of education in molding certain types of citizens. According to De Mente, "China's traditional educational system reinforced the concept of unquestioning obedience to authority and to the status quo in the social, economic, and political systems. Students were required, on pain of punishment, to accept the attitudes and standards of their teachers" (1996, p.23).

Despite the alleged rigors of the public school system in Czech society, post-secondary students were frequently in the front ranks of rebels and dissidents. The mass demonstrations of November 17, 1989 that led to the velvet revolution were started by a student march, and students were involved in the uprisings and protests of 1968 and others. The educational system of the Czech Republic follows a collectivistic train of thought while at the same time encouraging the individualistic attitudes that may pave the way for the integration of individualistic societies in the global marketplace.

Religion has a profound impact on the human experience and human cultures, and in both established and emerging nations religion supplies a strong guiding hand for education and work ethic. For that reason it is essential to concurrently consider a country's religion when evaluating the institutions that guide its social makeup.

The Czech Republic is simultaneously Catholic and Protestant; while the majority of Czechs are nominally Catholic, the nation's most evocative religious symbols are Protestant. Both characteristics are the workings of history. Pre-reformation Czech society gave birth to the proto-Protestant Jan Hus (see Photo 1) and the Hussite movement (see Photo 2) that swept Europe. The loss of sovereignty to the Habsburg Empire meant forced re-Catholicization at the time that Europe divided into Catholics and Protestants. The rebirth of Czechoslovakia was accompanied by reclamation of some Protestant symbols without any overt changes of faith, as demonstrated by the writings of David Short:

The Czechs are fairly apathetic in religious matters, but the Catholic Church enjoys the strongest following, with resurgence particularly among the monastic orders. Among non-Catholics there is a strong sense of a liberal (-ish) Christian Protestant ('evangelical' is the word they would use) heritage going back to the Hussites in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (1996, pp. 31-32)



Figure 6 Jan Hus Monument

Dedicated in 1915, the Jan Hus Monument stands in the Old Town Square of the city of Prague in the Czech Republic to commemorate the death of Jan Hus, a religious reformer who was burnt at the stake in the square in 1415. Photo taken in 2000 by David M. Marciniszyn.



In Eastern Europe Communism fought battles in the Church; for example, in Poland the role of the Church in supporting solidarity and its continued role in the post-Communist government are both well noted. In Czechoslovakia the battle appears to have been much more secular, a crossing of the swords between intellectuals and politicians. Matters religious are conspicuously absent (except in a historiographic sense) from Holy's detailed ethnography. Fawn never touches on them.

The religion of the Czech Republic could be interpreted as either a collectivist or individualist indicator. Many of the Protestant tenants developed by various Reformers in 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century Europe were individual in nature, focusing on the personal relationship between man and God. Catholicism tends to be more communal, and thus collectivist. A shared, commonly

expressed religion can reinforce community and collectivity; in Czech society, where both types are present, it appears that neither is strong.

The freedom of religion afforded to the people of the Czech Republic closely mirrors that of the United States, removing religion from the country's educational equation and allowing the two societies to interact on equal ground when engendering cross-societal relations. The role that religion and education play in Czech society should be carefully considered when classifying the societal tendencies of the Czech Republic in the interest of opening up lines of effective communication.

Figure 7 Tyn Church

Originally Hussite, Tyn Church is now a Catholic Church which dominates the skyline of the Old Town Square in the city of Prague in the Czech Republic. Photo taken in 2000 by David M. Marcinišzyn.



### The Role of Education and Religion in Sweden

The high value that the Swedish people place on education allows them to boast one of the most highly educated populations in the world (Svensson, 1987; Boucher, 1982; Svensson, 2000). The education system of Sweden was the focus of government-sponsored reforms from the 1960s (Weibull, 1993; Boucher, 1982), and it reflects clearly the state-sponsored values of Sweden. The ruling purpose of the reforms to the Swedish system was to create “a system designed to teach people to live and work together in harmony and with responsibility” (Boucher, 1982, p. 197). The Swedish school curriculum “stresses the need to support and strengthen democratic principles of tolerance, co-operation, a respect for truth and right, a respect for the sanctity of human life and the right to personal integrity” (Boucher, 1982, p. 197).

It may be useful here to briefly contrast with the traditional Swedish system, which, until the Social Democratic Party’s post 1950s reforms, “was seen as devoted to the upper estates and not to Tom, Dick and Harry” (Svensson, 1987, p.238). Like elsewhere in Europe the education system was first intended to train the select few for careers in the Church, then to serve the nobility. The reforms of the 20<sup>th</sup> century made public education available to the entire population and, in Sweden, attempted to actively change the education system to better reflect and to better create the sort of society the Swedes desired.

In Swedish society today education is primarily viewed as a tool by which the state can somehow promote egalitarianism and opportunity throughout its population. Most of the reforms in the Swedish system were aimed at increasing “social and educational equality” (Boucher, 1982, p. 199), providing better opportunities through the completion of compulsory and post-compulsory education among the disadvantaged classes and the immigrant populations.



Why do Swedish children go to school? To learn how to learn, or to learn how to do? Officially, it is to learn how to live. Writes Boucher, “There appears to be a not unreasonable balance between those who value ‘practical experience’ and those who value ‘theory’; a well educated persons knows why *and* how, how *as well as* why” (1982, p.204). School reforms have led to a “comprehensive system [that] by its openness, lack of selective examinations during the primary and lower secondary stages and its high retention rate is a more effective strategy for taking care of all the talent of a nation” (Boucher, 1982, p.199). Within this system it is intended that children will learn to self-actualize, improve and grow.

The original purposes of the reforms to the educational system were intended to help underprivileged students receive a public education that would allow them to think independently, encouraging greater individualism. Although the Swedish school system does not enforce a strictly collectivistic viewpoint, as is the case in many primarily collectivistic societies, notes Boucher, “For all the fine words about developing independence and co-cooperativeness, classrooms remain dominated by teachers who talk and who give instruction to passive and dependent students” (1982, p.196).

Idealistic and well-funded though the Swedish education system is its critics who bring observers’ attention to “reports of truancy, nonchalance, lack of care, lack of interest, vandalism, apathy and violence” (Boucher, 1982, p. 197). National examiners noted as early as 1979 that “Schools have become very uniform and teachers too afraid to individualize, to treat different children differently” (Boucher, 1982, p. 201), and while most Swedes are rightfully proud of their educational system others see it as not only faulty, but purposefully destructive. Boucher

provides this quote from a Swedish expatriate observing the state of education in his society from the distance of Paris:

Violence reigns on the streets and in the underground, pensioners dare not go outdoors, youth live in a constant narcotic dream, computers can expose all about our private lives, the police watch everybody but seldom interfere, all crime is excused on social grounds (except for tax avoidance), non-socialist politicians follow socialist policies, the students cannot spell, Olav Palme<sup>3</sup> has led a campaign for ignorance in the name of equality, the state brings up the children, the school is ambitious only for sex education—and equality between the sexes has gone so far that the Swedish man is suppressed about as much as a woman in South Morocco (Boucher, 1982, p.192).

The Swedish educational system suggests a pre-conditioned bent toward collectivism based on the degree of state control over the educational system despite the fact that the original purpose of the school reforms was to promote individualism among the students. The lack of personal motivation in the classrooms cultivates this collectivistic mindset and discourages students from breaking free of their pre-determined roles.

The fact that Swedish education is at cross-purposes with itself not only makes classification difficult but throws a wrench in the process of developing international relations as well. A society that mistakenly labels Sweden as purely collectivistic will find itself scrambling when attempting in an attempt to understand its national policy regarding education, while the label of individualism will also find a poor fit. Again, comprehension at the micro level of the individuals involved is essential in order to promote effective and mutual communication.

Sweden often considers itself one of the most secular countries in the world. Historically, however, religion has played an important part in this society, with the Church maintaining a strong role in the government and the establishment of the country's educational system. All the Scandinavian countries share a common faith—Lutheranism—and in Sweden, the heart of the

European Reformation and the Swedish penchant for government control meant that the Church of Sweden, Svenska Kyrkan, very early became a part of the central administration. The church did not gain its full independence from the state until 1996, which meant, among other things, that children born in Sweden automatically became members of the national church.

The Swedish religion could be interpreted as either a collectivist or individualist indicator. Many of the Protestant tenants developed by various Reformers in 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century Europe were individual in nature, focusing on the personal relationship between man and God. Catholicism tends to be more communal, and thus collectivist, than Protestantism. The majority of Swedes are what we may be tempted to call non-practicing Lutherans. Weibull (1993) notes the importance of religion in determining Swedish history and policy in the past; a discussion of religion in modern day Sweden is conspicuous only by its absence. The lack of institutional conformity in religion may suggest individualism in the country's religious system, as all individuals are expected and encouraged to make a personal decision with regard to their ideological beliefs.

#### The Role of Education and Religion in Greece

Unlike the United States, which maintains a stringent divide between religion and its educational system, it is impossible to consider the educational system of Greece without also considering its religious affiliations. The Orthodox Church is the primary force throughout Greece; indeed, it has been said that "to be Orthodox is to be Greek" (Tomazinis, 1999, Lecture Notes).

"When religious motivation is aroused, significant social mobilization is possible...Religion is a mainspring of culture (it)...justifies patterns of authority and patterns of



equal and unequal exchange among the members of society” (Tertstra & David, 1991, pp. 72-73). Even those that do not believe in God are still indirectly effected by religion every day. Despite its stringent attempts otherwise the Protestant influence still maintains a strong presence in the person of modern day capitalism in the United States (Weber, 1930). “Thus Greekness is much more than mere physicality. It is a state of mind, of soul, above all of language; and – historically at least – of membership in the Greek Orthodox Church.”

The historian William St Clair went as far as to call the Orthodox Church the Greeks’ ‘main unifying institution’” (Rawlins, 1997, p. 54). “The Greek Church is one of the great pillars of Greek society...The community of Athos is technically a theocracy: its powers are not derived from the people but from God. Its people are not normal people, but God’s...Greeks have a right to be proud of their church. The apostles walked its ports and towns...The new Testament is essentially a Greek document; the gift of the Greek church. The developments in the Orthodox Church are thus to the root what trunk and branches are to the tree: inseparable parts, necessary for its full fruition” (Rawlins, 1997, pp. 93-97).

Patricia Storace reveals the strong tie today between Greek national identity and the Orthodox Church when recounting the issue of registration of religion on Greek identity cards. Storace writes, “the favorites of the church said the usual things: that the Holy Mountain demanded obligatory registration, that we would lose our identity without it, that Orthodoxy is not a religion, it is a way of life, that the bones of the heroes of 1821 and Gregory the Fifth would groan if the identification was removed” (1996, p. 292). Today, “the church is used to meet both social and spiritual needs” (Giordano, McGoldrick & Pearce, 1996, p 518).

Storace reveals the link between the Orthodox Church and education in her statement, “The church meddles in teaching; the Ministry of Education here is called the Ministry of National Education and Religion. Greek schoolchildren have compulsory religious teaching in school, and the church has many particular positions on thinkers like Nietzsche and Freud, particular social preferences. If you look at the Christian ethics textbooks, they are coercive; you see very clearly which answers you are suppose to give. This makes the act of questioning meaningless, which along with our emphasis on rote learning in other subjects, sets a pattern in motion – repetition comes to have an emotional meaning for us, of allying ourselves with authority, of never being afraid of a question, because we already know the answer. And all kinds of hidden favoritisms can come into play here, with real consequences for a student’s future, not to mention the curtailment of free inquiry, although you will hear differently from many people, who say the church has no power. The fact is, the church affects our intellectual training, the patterns of our thinking, sometimes in barely perceptible ways...We do not learn to think, we memorize, we theologize, we declare unalterable doctrinal positions. We don’t think because we know” (1996, pp. 292-293).

The undeniable influence of the Greek Orthodox Church on the national system of education, coupled by the fact that education up through the secondary level is both mandatory and provided at no cost through the government, presents a strong argument for the pervading presence of collectivism in Greek society.

### The Role of Education and Religion in China

China is, first and foremost, a secular state. Throughout history no dominant religion has come to the forefront to claim power, although the adherence to the teachings of Confucianism during the age of Imperial China borders on the fervor displayed by religious zealots.

It is the teachings of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism which dominate the ideological views of the people of China. The Chinese character Tao means “path” or “way”. Taoism is believed to be the teaching of the way to allow the people of China to live a peaceful life in harmony with nature and with each other. Taoist ethics emphasize the Three Jewels of the Tao-compassion, moderation and humility. The numerous branches of Taoism often have very differing beliefs, as the Tao is based upon numerous teachings rather than a single source; however, all students of the Tao are taught to follow the natural order of the universe.

Buddhism closely mirrors Confucianism in that it is a religion built upon the teachings of a single individual; in this case, Siddhartha Gautama, known as Gautama Buddha. Buddhism is a religion built on the quest for enlightenment. Like Taoism, there are few generalizations that can be made about all Buddhists.

The nature of Buddhism and the quest for personal enlightenment presents a strong argument for the role it plays in maintaining the individualism of its followers; the teachings of the Tao and Confucianism promote a collectivistic viewpoint and a continued harmony with the environment and society. Therefore, while it can be said that the religion of China plays a role in its societal tendencies it must be considered on a person by person basis at the micro level before a classification can be made.

Hofstede states in his writings that “in the West, ethical rules tend to be derived from religion: Virtue from Truth.” (p. 172). This is the assumption that there is a common truth which can be



embraced and understood. The logic would be if “A is true, B, which is the opposite of A, must be false” (Hofstede, 1991, p. 171).

In contrast Confucianism, Taoism and other religious/non-religious ethics imply that there is a greater truth in pieces of multiple possibilities. “If A is true, its’ opposite B may also be true, and together they produce a wisdom which is superior to either A or B.” The opposite of the West but a similar result since “a person can improve him/herself,” without believing in a revealed truth but through “ritual, meditation, or ways of living.”

While religious teachings permeate governmental policies the administration of China’s educational system is firmly controlled by the state. The Ministry of Education oversees all educational institutions, providing free education for its citizens up through the age of 17. The country had previously had had free higher education; however, this was abolished in the 1980s.

The Chinese educational system allows its students the opportunity for personal advancement through higher education and vocational programs, demonstrating the presence of individualism in what is commonly considered to be a solely collectivistic nation. Furthermore, competition for scholarships and class space in the universities is strong, encouraging students to strive to obtain their personal best. On a micro level, however, the educational system is still very communistic and Marxist in its existence. Teachers often teach to classes of students that lack the initiative they need to succeed on an individual level, and according to De Mente, “China’s traditional educational system reinforced the concept of unquestioning obedience to authority and to the status quo in the social, economic, and political systems. Students were required, on pain of punishment, to accept the attitudes and standards of their teachers” (1996, p.23).

The educational system of China demonstrates the need for a blending of individualistic and collectivistic qualities in order for a society to remain functional. In time this balance will play a vital role in preparing its future executives to take their place in the new global society.

#### Summary of Chapter 6

As with each indicator of collectivistic and individualistic societies religion and education can be valuable tools in determining a society's orientation. The role of the church in the educational system, coupled with its teachings regarding the community, present a strong argument for the role played by religion in determining the tendencies of a particular society and its spread to the next generation. Further, the role played by the state in the provision of both a primary and secondary education for its people supports the argument for the degree of collectivism and/or individualism to be found in a society.

A society in which the church and government plays a strong role in education can be said to be collectivistic, with a primary focus on encouraging children to learn in order to take their pre-ordained place in society. The motivation given by the teacher for individual excellence also plays a role; educational institutions in individualistic societies stress accomplishment over attendance, administering rigorous exams at a young age and encouraging competition within the classroom.

This information must be considered with other factors at the micro level; however, paired with the role played by the family religion and education may be the most reliable indicators of societal tendencies in existence.

## CHAPTER 7

### THE INFLUENCE OF THE ECONOMY

#### The Workplace and Economy of the Czech Republic

Within the Czech Republic the lingering effects of Communism supersede any more traditional Czech attitudes relating toward the workplace and the economy. Holy recounts this joke popular in Czechoslovakia in the 1970s:

The first peculiarity of socialism: everybody is employed and nobody works. The second peculiarity: nobody works and the plan gets fulfilled one hundred per cent. The third peculiarity: the plan is fulfilled one hundred per cent and there is nothing to be had in the shops. The fourth peculiarity: there is nothing to be had in the shops and people have everything. The fifth peculiarity: people have everything and everybody grumbles about the regime from morning until night. The sixth peculiarity: everybody grumbles about the regime all the time and in the elections everybody votes for it (Holy, 1989, p.31).

This joke illustrates the contradictions that were the reality of Czech life for almost fifty years and highlights the impossibility of a healthy work environment for those trapped in this paradox. According to Hofstede, relationships between employers and employees in a collectivist society are perceived in moral or familial terms, while in an individualist society the relationship is a contract based on mutual advantage (Hofstede, 1997, p.67). Until very recently the Czech employee-employer relationship was neither. The employer was usually the state or a representative of the state, and the relationship was frequently adversarial, characterized by low trust, low motivation, and low performance (Fawn, 2000).

Yet when, in 1990 and 1992, Czech newspapers conducted polls asking Czechs to describe the personal characteristics of Czech people, the most common positive trait people



named was hardworking (Holy, 1996, p.76). Fawn (2000) notes the speed and relative success with which the Czech Republic undertook its transformation to a market economy, posing the question, “Is work ethic tied to a particular type of society?” Is it possible for individuals in a collectivistic society, for whom the end result of their labor is going to be the same regardless of the amount of personal effort expended, to possess the same level of work ethic as their individualistic counterparts?

The adaptability of the Czech Republic leads to the conclusion that a strong work ethic is possible in either collectivist or individualist societies, although for different reasons. Working for the good of a collective unit—be it family or society—has material and spiritual rewards just as working for the good of oneself. Furthermore, the reinforcement of the group in a collectivist society likely provided intense motivation for individuals to abstain from behaviors that would cause their peers to label them as lazy; despite the fact that the personal rewards in a collectivistic society did not increase proportionately with personal effort an individual failing to put forth said effort was damaging the group, something firmly against the core principles of collectivism in which the well-being of the group is weighed more heavily than that of the individual.

The transition to a market economy in the Czech Republic featured initial miracle growth, and then a crash—more mildly called a down-turn—in the mid-1990s. While unemployment never reached the staggering numbers of some other transforming economies it nonetheless rose, adding another tension to the employee-employer relationship. The following quotation by Fawn illustrates the current Czech attitude toward their place in the market:

On the one hand, the Czech economic ethos is towards consumer choice, the market and wealth, [but]... they are not satisfied with the transition. (...) On the other hand, Czechs want wealth on a democratic basis; the new market environment renews the historic Czech trend towards egalitarianism. While they

want wealth, they generally reject the social stratification that comes with it (Fawn, 2000, p.123).

Although rejection of social stratification is not *per se* a collectivist trait (in fact, many highly collectivist societies—e.g. traditional and Communist China—are also highly stratified) it suggests a temperance of individual pursuit and ambition more in accordance with collectivistic principles than those of individualism, lending more weight to the presentation of the Czech Republic as a primarily collectivistic society.

### The Workplace and Economy of Sweden

The primary objective of the Swedish education system is to prepare students to take their place in the workplace, and unlike the United States the relationship between the Swedish government and the workplace is a very close one. “By far the greatest proportion of university and college graduates has gone into state or other public work,” notes Svensson (1987, p.245). The state is Sweden’s single biggest employer, and not just in the aggregate. The Swedish health system employs more Swedes than any other private or public enterprise; together with the social welfare system and the education system it comprises more than 22 percent of the entire workforce. Add remaining public employees and more than one third of the Swedish labor force is accounted for. Svensson writes:

Almost all these workers are publicly employed, and are to a very great extent dependent on state revenue. Some of them, like social workers, have as their main task simply to redistribute and transfer this revenue, whereas others are in well-established professions, or still fighting to control the selection to their group, to control knowledge and education, and to expand and control their labor market (Svensson, 1987, p. 237).

Unions play a very prominent role in the Swedish labor system. Approximately 80 percent of the Swedish workforce is unionized, including many of the sectors that in the United States are

forbidden to unionize or who have never considered the potential of unionization. Among the privileges enjoyed by established trade unions is the employer's duty to initiate negotiations with the trade union before introducing major changes, such as closing an office or appointing a new manager.

The above behaviors are all strongly collectivist per Hofstede's differentiation, also bringing into play the tendency for conformity mentioned in the discussion on the family relationship intertwined with a stress on egalitarianism. There is also a much higher level of formality in business relations and workplace relationships than is usual in comparable American situations. Morrison (2000) highlights some of the aspects of this formality. Meetings, she writes, start with a handshake, but she cautions American businessmen against being too friendly or forward. Calling your counterpart by his first name is not appropriate—Mr. Olson is, and Professor Olson, or Director Olson, if he has a title, is even better. Appointments should be made well in advance; entertainment takes place at formal restaurants where the host makes reservations and punctuality is a must.

Within a professional setting, writes Morrison (2000), Swedes value consensus and dislike confrontation; moreover, they do not like to show or see emotion during negotiation—or humor, for that matter. Compared to Americans the Swedes are a quiet people, employing a moderate tone of voice and temperate use of gestures at all times. Morrison offers this advice to the foreigner navigating the Swedish workplace:

In presentations, be very precise and concrete; do not exaggerate or expect the Swedish imagination to do part of the work. Humor is not usually part of negotiations. Swedes tend to be serious in general, and may appear downright stuffy in business (2000).



It is hard to determine whether the Swedes reject or respect social stratification in the workplace. Officially, state policy is towards socialist egalitarianism. Unofficially, the use of titles and the formality of custom suggest otherwise. If rejection of overt stratification suggests a temperance of individual pursuit and ambition its recognition may suggest the opposite, implying that in a professional environment the Swedish people may display more individualistic tendencies than are seen elsewhere in their lives. The combination of collectivist state involvement in the labor force and individualistic division of labor display yet again the ability of the two systems to work harmoniously within Swedish society to effect functional results.

#### The Workplace and Economy of Greece

The Greeks have been described as mountain-people since “the difficult terrain and the constant attacks to which it has been subjected has contributed in no small way to the Greek mentality, in part that of mountain-people characterized by toughness, intelligence, inventiveness and an unyielding spirit” (Rawlins, 1997, p. 37). Greece, a country considered by Hofstede’s standards to be highly individualistic, in actuality depends very strongly on the interrelationships of its labor force in order to survive.

“Approximately four fifths of all businesses in Greece are family ones, which ensures the loyalty of employees since most of them are connected to the owners by family ties, friendship or even regional origin” (Fiada, 1994, p. 60). Employment is determined by family connections rather than education and experience, as it is in the United States, making it difficult for the individual without family or who has been ostracized from their family to find employment.

Rawlins supports Fiada when he writes that “Greece has a self-employment rate (which includes the employment) of no less than 47% - only 53% work for others, a disproportionate

number cushioned in the civil service. This condition restricts the jobs' pool and tends to favor selection in the direction of one's kith and kin (the *parea*), making employment more difficult for those outside the circle. Kinship in Greece is an elastic term, which moves in concentric circles: immediate family, extended family, locality dwellers, fellow nationals, expatriates" (1997, p. 216). In addition, "Greece, in some areas, is still struggling out of the condition that more northern neighbors threw off after the industrial revolution. It is still a nation of small businesses. Manufacturing industry is split between minor and major units, the defining point being ten workers...The 1994 Eurostat figures show that 23% of the work-force was in industry; a little below this was in agriculture; 55% in services...The average GDP per head on the basis of PPS is 9500, the lowest in the EU...It is a trenchant critique of their productivity, of their failure to make of process things" (Rawlins, 1997, p. 43).

The aforementioned paragraph begs us to ask the question, can the Greek work ethic be tied to collectivism? I asked this question of the wife of one of my class mates, who provided me with insights when she cited that Greeks working for both large and small companies "came in late and some did not come in at all. When my friend, who is the manager asked why the Greeks would make up a different excuse each time." The work ethic of the Greek people is strongly tied to family obligation, as explained by Hofstede when he writes, "Obligations to the family in a collectivist society are not only financial but also ritual. Family celebrations like baptisms, marriages, and, especially, funerals are extremely important and should not be missed. Expatriate managers from individualistic societies are often surprised by the family reasons given by employees from a collectivist host society who apply for a special leave; the expatriates think they are being fooled but most likely the reasons are authentic" (Hofstede, 1991, p. 59).

Another argument for the strong social tie of the Grecian work ethic comes from Patricia Storace's book Dinner with Persephone, in which Storace writes that "Marina and her father are drinking ouzo at a table in the sunshine. They are arguing over a proposed change in the law that would allow Greek stores to stay open on Sundays. Her father is vehemently for it – "it will be good for business," he says, "and besides, the merchants should be free to choose what they will do. Why should they be interfered with? The church is violently opposed, and so is Marina. "And if a merchant doesn't want to open on Sundays, but everyone else does? How can he compete? Anyway, we should not let business rule our lives, and take a place that culture and music and food and conversation should occupy, we don't want lives like the Americans who do nothing but work, freedom is everything to Greeks"" (1996, p. 194).

The sharp contrast between the western work ethic and that of the Greeks is illustrated in the last line of Storace's work; although the Greek people work hard to uphold their family ties they lack the obsession with working hours and punctuality that drives commerce in western nations such as the United States. The focus of the Greek worker is on their family obligation rather than their personal gain, providing strong evidence for the existence of Greece as a collectivist society.

### The Workplace and Economy of China

As with the societies of its neighbors the workplace and economy of China demonstrate a strategic blending of the old and the new combined with an impeccable balance of individualism and collectivism that allows the economy to enjoy maximum growth. Under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping private enterprise has come to the forefront of the Chinese economy, increasing the gap between the rich and the poor beyond that which was present during the years of heavy



Communism. The materialistic viewpoint of wealth among many of the younger Chinese generations has given birth to the saying that in China, “You are what you have” (Harper, 2005, p.60), firmly supporting the view of Chinese enterprise as a mix of an individualistic exterior with a collective interior.

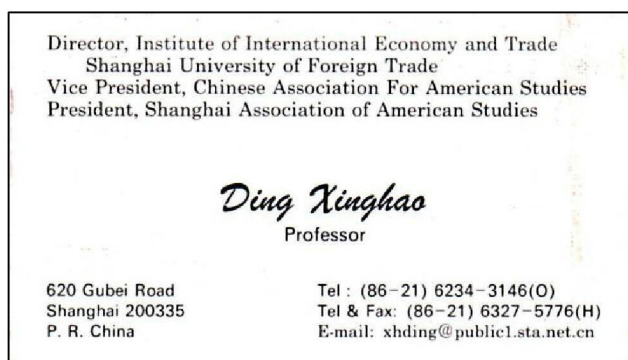
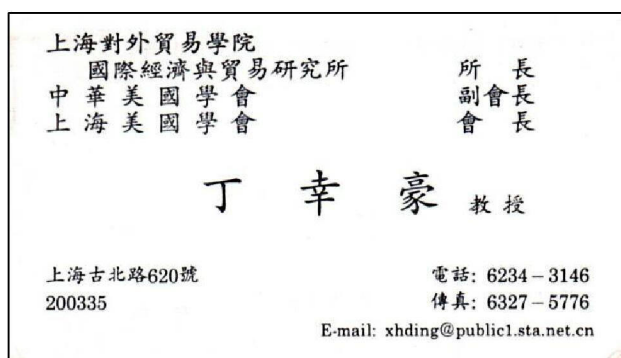
Until recent years China’s economic growth was stagnant, demonstrating the negative effect of drifting too close to the societal poles. The Chinese workplace is based heavily upon association, although the granting of positions is not as interpersonal as in Greece’s collectivistic economy. In exploring relationships “whom do I know who can...is a formula that springs as quickly to the mind of a Westerner as it does to that of a Chinese” (Starr, 1997, p. 76).

. A Chinese individual looking to do business with another firm prefers to do so with a company and a team of delegates with whom they are already familiar. Unlike in the United States, where business meetings are evaluated on the basis of how quickly and efficiently a goal is accomplished, a business meeting among the Chinese is considered to be an opportunity “to get to know one another.”

Oddly enough, business cards have become an essential tool in the Chinese workplace. Although business cards are an important tool in the United States an individual could still conduct business if they had left their card clip at home. Chinese etiquette, however, places such a high value on the exchange of business cards that this would not be permitted to happen. Alston and Yongsin He state that “a person has not been properly introduced until business cards have been exchanged. The Chinese keep these cards in special files for future reference” (1997, p. 138). The emphasis on the exchange of business cards serves as a reflection of the importance of personal relations and the place within the group.

While visiting China I was asked on two separate occasions for my business card, despite the fact that I was there as an academic and had no intention of conducting business. An acquaintance who had immigrated to the United States from Shanghai 9 years previously explained that in China business cards are printed in English on one side and in Chinese on the other, providing information not only on the professional position of the owner but on their education and position in the private sector as well. (See Figure 8)

Figure 8 The Two Sides of a Chinese Business Card



Time has very little relevance to business dealings in China, a phenomenon that has become known in the western world as a polychronic culture. Time for the Chinese people appears to be cyclic rather than linear. Multiple tasks are handled at the same time, and time is less important than interpersonal relations. While western cultures base the exchange of their goods and services on the potential benefits each company can provide it is interpersonal relations that will determine whether business is conducted, and whether it will continue to be conducted, among Chinese society.

Of special note when discussing the economic society of China is its views on favors in negotiations. Where citizens of the United States may have problems asking for a favor from someone we have not seen since elementary school the Chinese will think nothing of it. This exchange of favors and the continuation of even superficial relations are considered to be normal in their society, and it applies throughout both personal and professional circles of acquaintance.

Even within the workplace the presence of “face” permeates Chinese society. Kristof and Wudunn’s displayed in their writings the game that can be played by using the Chinese sense of “face” to a non-Chinese citizen’s advantage. In the overview it was revealed that Wudunn could not obtain a visa renewal to continue to work in China. Wudunn finally contacted the American Embassy, who created a plan. The American Embassy effectively delayed approving US visas to Chinese Reporters. When the Chinese government became aggravated with the situation the American Embassy approved two visas to show that they were trying to resolve the situation.

Chinese officials were then essentially railroaded into granting a visa to Wudunn, since to continue to deny the visa would make it appear that the Chinese officials were not trying to help and therefore would lose face. On the reverse side, by granting a visa renewal to Wudunn, the Chinese officials could say that they were doing Wudunn a favor instead of caving in to pressure



by the American Embassy. In this way the Chinese government was actually able to gain face (p. 419-421). This is similar to the leverages used by the American government to get the Chinese to change their policies on human rights and other issues.

In an article written by Donna Smith for the Philadelphia Inquire China's Most Favored Nation (MFN) status was being debated (1998). Smith wrote that "a measure that would change the designation from MFN to Normal Trade Relations (NTR) was approved by the panel's trade sub-committee. Opponents argue that the United States should not maintain normal trade relations with China because of its record on human rights, forced abortions, and because of concerns about missile and nuclear-technology transfers" (p. A13). Similarities between this debate and the preceding Wudunn example can be brought out. The US could give China NTR status but not MFN status, putting pressure on China to take the necessary actions to maintain good trade relations if they wish to fully reinstate their previous rating.

On the other hand, Dwight H. Perkin states that "the proper reasons for extending MFN, however, has little to do with short-term negotiating tactics over human rights or weapons sales. It is the long-term goal of a prosperous China integrated into the international economic system that matters" (1997, p. 160). In that same book, Julia Chang Bloch (1997), defines MFN as "the basis for normal trade relations between the United States and other nations, not an special favor to China...Non renewal would bring into question the consistency of U.S. policy, given that the United States extends MFN status to many countries that have abhorrent human rights records" (Living with China, pp. 196-197). Therefore, the simple act of renewal of MFN yearly for China's non-market economy may be sufficient to allow the U.S. to maintain its negotiation leverage with China. Bloch reveals that at the last minute the "United States and China achieved a major breakthrough on intellectual property rights..." therefore it "smoothed the way for

congressional approval...to extend MFN to China by an unusually large margin” (1997, p. 196-197). This compromise allowed the Chinese government to maintain face by separating the IPR from the MFN approval.

The Chinese economy and workplace calls back into play many of the collectivistic characteristics of its family system while at the same time incorporating the philosophies of individualism and private enterprise that launched its economy out of stagnation and spurred forward its current rapid rate of growth.

### Summary of Chapter 7

It is within a country’s workplace and economy that the true diversity of societal tendencies comes into light, because it is within these boundaries that a balance must be established in order to allow a country to function in the international market. A collectivistic economy will breed a workforce that does not reap personal gain, working instead for the satisfaction to be derived from providing for the group as a whole. These individuals maintain a stringent work ethic in order to avoid being labeled as lazy by their peers.

Over time most truly collectivistic economies have shifted, recognizing the need for personal enterprise in the new global market. Through individualism members of a society are given the opportunity to build wealth and “climb the corporate ladder,” reaping the benefits of personal advancement in their careers.

The prevalent tendency of the working environment and economy should not be considered a strong indicator of a society’s natural tendencies, since as mentioned earlier it is going to be forced to maintain a delicate balance between stagnation and chaos to continue to survive in today’s fast paced market. Careful consideration should be given to other micro factors before a classification is made.





## CHAPTER 8

### THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL PROGRAMS

#### Social Programs in the Czech Republic

It has been argued that the support of extended family networks when an individual reaches adulthood is a strong indicator of collectivity. What about social welfare programs, in which the state, or the government, plays family to needy citizens? Do more government programs suggest a collectivist society, even in a post-Communistic environment?

The majority of researchers on the subject answer with a resounding yes. Even as the Czech Republic divested itself of Communism and entered the free market its first prime minister, “the unbridled free-marketer [Vaclav] Klaus” (Fawn, 2000, p.123), was constructing a social safety net. Czech analysts argued from the beginning that “the existence of the welfare state in Czechoslovakia.... becomes the crucial condition for the success of all initiated changes” (Fawn, 2000, p.123).

Despite the fact that during official collectivism and Communism “[I]dentification with the state is also denied a positive value” (Holy, 1996, p.189), as Czech society embarked on the more individualist market path of capitalism and democracy it also “retained a strong imperative towards ensuring a distribution of wealth and opportunity” (Fawn, 2000, p.123).

In Table 1 the conflict between the collectivism enforced by state during the decades of Communist government and the yearnings for individualism, freedom and self-actualization articulated and acted by Czech dissidents is clearly illustrated. A discussion of the social

programs currently in effect in the Czech Republic demonstrates the continuing conflict between the state's collectivist and individualist traits. Now that collectivism is no longer sanctioned by the state, the polarization is less clear and choices more difficult. The press, for example, is free, and political power is exercised by voters, both traits of individualist societies, but, as noted above, collectivist elements remain strong.

Speculation as to the role that the interplay between these two societal elements serves indicates that despite the individualistic movement among the Czech Republic which is drawing it forward out of stagnation it continues to cling to its collectivistic roots, using the familiar boundaries to ease their entry into the global market with a minimum of chaos.

#### Social Programs in Sweden

It has been argued that in many societies, support of the family, and by the family, tends to indicate collectivity. It was also suggested that this role in Swedish society is somewhat weakened because the state fills the role of the family, or, to be more precise, of a caretaker. What role do social welfare programs, in which the state or government plays parent to needy citizens, play in the determination of the individualism or collectivism of a democratic socialist country? Do more government programs suggest a collectivist society?

Sweden started building its welfare state almost 10 years before other industrialized capitalist countries, and it is clear that via their social welfare programs the Swedish government is much more involved in the lives of its people than the American one. Swedish health care and education are publicly funded through Sweden's taxation system, usually considered the highest in the world (Boucher, 1982). (This closely mirrors the American Medicaid system; however, health care is available to all citizens rather than those that are able to meet the stringent requirements.)

Weibull (1993) outlines the various reforms instituted by the Social Democrats through the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Sweden may have been the first country in the world to introduce an old age pension when it did so in 1914 (Weibull, 1993, p. 118). Public opinion elected the Social Democrats repeatedly since 1914, with the majority of voters supporting the institution of the welfare state. When the right-wing finally secured a majority government in Sweden in the early 1990s there could be no attempt at dismantling the welfare system, and efforts to make it more cost-effective had to be small. A certain level of service, support, and security, higher than anything in Americans have ever experienced, had been part of the Swedish experience for too long (Weibull, 1993).

The majority of the social programs offered to Swedes as the benefits of citizenship are available to many Americans only via the government for those deemed appropriately needy or at the discretion of their employers. All of Sweden's social programs are run by the Swedish government. Pensions are available to all citizens, unemployment insurance is plentiful and steady and educational stipends are freely available. Medical leave consists of two weeks at almost full pay, up to a year at 80 percent of pay, and indefinitely after that at 70 percent. All employees are entitled to five weeks paid vacation a year, with collective agreements and individual contracts of employment retaining the option to stipulate more. Maternity/paternity policies allow a female parent six weeks leave before delivery, and either parent up to 18 months leave post-delivery (Lagerlöf & Leman, 2000). (A system that is vastly different than that of the United States, which has only recently begun offering its employees paid paternity leave.)



Perhaps most illustrative of the role of the government in providing for the needs of the Swedish population is its role in developing cultural policy. On behalf of the Swedish Government Franks (1994) writes:

Swedes think it self evident that there should be publicly-run theatres, concert halls, public libraries and museums as well as private theatres and drama groups, and chamber-music and other music groups... And they know all cultural activity depends on individual artists, writers and other professionals (p. 7).

Franks' description of the way that this cultural activity is managed is instructive of the Swedish attitude toward government and life:

The Swedish concept of a 'cultural policy' signifies an ordered, structured means for giving expression to official endeavors in this area of public responsibility. A functioning policy presupposes goals, working methods, responsible political and administrative bodies and economic resources.

This policy concerns all the arts, museums and their activities; professional artists; the printed media; and measures to benefit children and young people, and to lighten the lot of the handicapped.

The broader aims of cultural policy are to further equality and to offer individuals chances of living richer lives (Franks, 1994, p. 7).

Sweden's cultural policy demonstrates a continuing inclination toward individualism; however, its social programs are undeniably those of a collectivistic society. The active role that the government plays in the lives of its people allows it to continue to maintain a generalized social well being throughout its entire population.

### Social Programs in Greece

The Greek welfare state is a new concept, and despite Greece's strong collectivistic roots elsewhere their welfare state closely resembles that of the United States. The government provides funding for health care, the level of which is determined by the individual's ability to pay either out of pocket or through their insurance despite attempts by the socialist

government to dictate otherwise. Social security exists, but it is poor. It is expected that before too long the Greek welfare state will be overwhelmed as the result of the poor planning of the individuals that put it into effect.

Welfare rates for Greece and other European Union members are displayed in Table 3 below.

Table 3 Aspects of Welfare in the European Union c. 1990

	Health expenditure as % of GDP, 1981	Health expenditure as % of GDP, 1991	Public expenditure on health as % of total health expenditure, 1989-91	Health bills paid by public insurance, 1991 (%)	Public spending on education as % of GDP, 1991	Total public expenditure on social protection as % of GDP, 1980	Total public expenditure on social protection as % of GDP, 1989	Unemployment benefits in the European Union, 1994:			
								1st period: Duration in months	Percentage of wage	Thereafter: Duration in months	Percentage of wage
	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k
Belgium	7.2	8.1	88.9	86.0	5.4	28.0	26.7	12	79	No limit	55
Denmark	6.8	7.0	81.5	85.0	6.1	28.7	29.8	30	73	No limit §	63
France	7.9	9.1	73.9	75.0	5.4	25.4	27.6	12	80	No limit	33-67
Germany	8.7	9.1	71.8	92.0	4.0	28.7	27.5	12	63	No limit	56
Greece	4.5	4.8	77.0	85.0	3.0	12.2	20.7	12	28	0	0
Holland	8.2	8.7	73.1	71.0	5.6	30.8	31.0	24	74	No limit	46
Ireland	8.8	8.0	75.8	90.0	5.5	21.6	20.2	12	41	No limit	32-35
Italy	6.7	8.3	77.5	75.0	4.1	19.4	23.1	6	30	0	0
Luxembourg	7.1	6.6	91.4	91.0	5.8	26.5	25.2	12	85	No limit	46
Portugal	6.4	6.2	61.7		5.5	14.7	16.6	21	81	21	44
Spain	5.8	6.5	82.2	90.0	4.5	18.1	20.1	6	80	18	70
UK	6.1	6.6	83.3	93.0	5.3	21.5	21.9	12	23	No limit	23
EU-12 *	7.0	7.4	78.2	84.8	5.0	24.4	25.2				
USA		13.3	43.9	61.0	5.5		14.6 #				
Japan		6.8	72.0	87.0	3.7						

\* EU-12 averages in columns a to e are unweighted.  
 # In 1990 (UN Human Development Report 1995, p. 202).  
 § It was recently set at seven years, in turn broken down into a 4-yr and a 3-yr period.

Sources: Column a: *Contonica* (1994), on the basis of OECD data.  
 Column b to d: *UN Human Development Report* 1995, p. 199.  
 Column e: *UN Human Development Report* 1995, p. 200.  
 Columns f, g: 'Social Europe', *E Cathemerine*, 9.4.1994, on the basis of EuroStat data.  
 Columns h to k: *E Cathemerine*, 1.10.1995, p. 20, on the basis of data from the Labour Institute of the Greek Workers' Confederation and the 5th Directorate of the European Commission.

The low amount of money spent by Greece on unemployment and its position in the welfare states argues for the underlying connection of the family as a support mechanism, tying

back to Greece's collectivist roots in which the family, rather than the government, provides for the needs of the individual.

### Social Programs in China

The notable absence of an adequate welfare program in China is one of the few true exceptions to its general collectivistic nature. The switch to a more western collectivistic society left many of China's citizens behind; although employers continue to offer such benefits as pensions, insurance and maternity leave it is at the discretion of the employer and not regulated by the state.

The current Chinese social welfare system focuses on pension, medical insurance, unemployment insurance, work-related injuries and benefits for families which have just given birth. The social welfare tax rate in China is much higher than that of its neighbors, requiring enterprises to pay 20% of salaries for pension and 9.8% for the other insurances; some provincial governments raise this rate even further.

It is in its social welfare program that China can be said to mirror its individualistic neighbors to the west most closely, with state funded benefits only made available to state operated enterprises and leaving out the farmers, employees of township enterprises and immigrants to urban areas that would derive the greatest benefits and have the fewest alternatives. Like the United States it is the most needy in China that are unable to benefit from its social programs, instead being left to find their way or fall by the wayside into the anonymity found by so many of their neighbors.

The absence of adequate social welfare is compensated by the role that the family plays in society. Individuals in need of assistance, particularly among the elderly, are provided for by other



members of their family. Children will provide their parents with food and clothing. Brothers will assist their brothers in locating adequate employment and meet their needs in the meantime.

Without the collectivistic inclination of the family unit the lack of social welfare in China, home to one of the largest populations in the world, could be potentially devastating.

### Summary of Chapter 8

The extent of the social reform system in a society is a strong indicator in determining whether its primary nature is individualistic or collectivistic. The very definition of a collectivistic society states that the primary focus is on the well being of the group rather than the individual; therefore, societies with extensive social programs and benefits (such as free medical care, pensions and medical leave) show an increasing tendency toward collectivism than societies which do not provide these benefits or which provide them at the whim of the government or employer.

## CHAPTER 9

## THE INFLUENCE OF NATIONALITY

The Czech Republic – Living as a Nation

In Czech spiritual history, in Czech statehood, there are some motives on which it is possible and, in my opinion, necessary to build. One of them is the idea that “Czechness” itself is not enough that that it is not something hovering somewhere at the summit of all values but gains meaning and fulfillment only by the way in which it accepts, so to speak, pan-human tasks and responsibility for a general human destiny. We are here not only for ourselves, and if we followed only our own interests we would not get very far. I think that a revived Czech statehood must have its spiritual and moral dimension, which can be found in the sphere of thought as well as in the sphere of statehood. It is the tradition of faith, spirituality, tolerance, education. ...

*(Havel, in Respekt, 1992, no. 29, p.4; in Holy, 1996, p.119; emphasis added)*

Thus wrote the Czech Republic’s first president, Vaclav Havel, as the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic tore in half and the Czech nation became an ethnically homogenous country and state. From 1968 through to the present day Havel and other dissidents, as they agitated for individual freedom and a dismantling of socialism, also advocated the return to a collective sense of morality and responsibility. They saw the strict boundaries between the public and private lives as dangerous and, in fact, immoral, fostering an unhealthy materialism and unnatural isolation (Holy, 1989).

Holy notes that when discussing Czech nationality and attitudes towards society it is necessary to differentiate between the nation (the “Great Czech Nation”, as it is referred to in his ethnography) and the state, for which there has traditionally been little trust. Holy further differentiates between Czech perceptions of themselves as a nation and themselves as individuals. The former are positive, marked by strong patriotism and nationalism. The latter are, in the vast majority, negative, and marked by a perception of the “little Czech” (Holy’s label for the Czech

individual in contrast to the Great Czech nation of which he is proud) as envious, cunning, conformist, and egotistical (Holy, 1996, p.76). Yet these people also see themselves as living in an inherently democratic nation of hard-working intellectuals.

These contradictory perceptions of self and nation are linked to the current struggle between individualist and collectivist tendencies in Czech society. Holy provides this excerpt from a Czech newsmagazine to illustrate:

Considerably helped by the mass media, we constantly persuade each other that we are not what we necessarily must be after fifty years of systematic brainwashing: a horde of lazy ignoramuses and hateful and envious cowards. Instead, we persuade ourselves with characteristic megalomania that we are hard-working and intelligent people whose 'gentle' revolution was watched with envy by all Europe. (Forum, 1990, no.44:4, quoted in Holy, 1996, p.78)

This struggle between individualist and collectivist tendencies is accompanied by a feeling of shame that swings the pendulum toward a feeling of national collectivism. Hofstede discusses shame as one of the differences between the two types of cultures. In collectivist cultures, shame and "loss of face" are the consequence of disobeying societal norms (Hofstede, 1997, p.67); "in the individualist society the counterpart characteristic is 'self-respect', but this again is defined from the point of view of the individual, whereas (a sense of face is) defined from the point of view of the social environment" (Hofstede, 1997, p. 61).. He further defines the notion of 'face' and its link to collectivism when he writes that "a concept bred in the collectivist family is face" (p.61).

The importance of face is the consequence of living in a society that is very conscious of social contexts. Czech society is very conscious of social contexts, and many of these contexts are in flux. The transition from its early collectivist roots to the more individualistic nation is a



difficult one for many members, causing them to continue to cling to their old boundaries and beliefs.

The majority of Czechs have lived without the possibility of extensive foreign travel for almost fifty years, and before that, circumstances did not allow for the same sort of freedom of movement enjoyed today by people in the United States and the West. Experience with other cultures was limited to sporadic encounters, and prolonged encounters were frequently negative (e.g. Soviets post-World War II, Germans during World War II, the Austrian Habsburgs before that). In such a climate tendencies towards xenophobia can develop. These tendencies are highly apparent in the Czech perception of the Slovakian people, with whom they lived in a federated sovereign state for most of the last century.

In Table 4, Holy summarizes how Czechs perceive Slovak culture in opposition to Czech culture (Holy, 1996, p.107).

Table 4 Czech Perception of Slovak Culture

<u>Czechs</u>	<u>Slovaks</u>
Modern society	Traditional community
History	Lack of history
Statehood	Lack of statehood
Progress	Underdeveloped
Adult [also, older brother]	Young [also, younger brother]
Culture	Nature
Rationality	Emotions
West	East

The Czech people identify their culture as being both opposite and superior to that of the Slovaks in every way. Furthermore, they regard expatriates (those who left Czechoslovakia post-Prague Spring and at other times) as deserters. Holy recounts the excitement with which Czechs greeted expatriates entertainers and dissidents who were banned entry into the nation until 1989

and the speed with which this excitement turned to disillusionment when the expatriates announced that while happy to visit, they would not be moving back. Actor Jan Triska, for example, initially hailed a returning hero, was found to be “more American than the Americans... his once beautiful Czech was found to be corrupted” (Holy, 1996, p.69) and his performance in a Czech documentary, disappointing.

While a tendency towards xenophobia is not necessarily limited to collectivist societies, in the case of the Czech Republic it appears to serve to strengthen identification with the social and cultural network of being Czech; thus, xenophobia contributes further to the society’s collectivistic tendencies.

It is likely, however, that this aspect of Czech society will change (Fawn, 2000). Social interaction and experience with different cultures helps to break down xenophobia and opens our eyes to new possibilities and learning. Peter Berlin defines xenophobia as “an irrational fear of foreigners, probably justified, always understandable” (1999, back cover). Research helps to alleviate xenophobia by promoting understanding of the culture; first-hand experience achieves it even more expediently.

Cultural differences contribute strongly to a country’s xenophobia, as foreigners with strange ways and strange tongues intrude on their established society and impose their own customs and beliefs. An example of this would in the very intimacy of public conversations. In a recent trip to the Czech Republic it came to my attention that when it comes to public discourse Americans are much more voluble than their neighbors (see Figure 9). This excessively loud verbosity can lead the people of the Czech Republic to view their American counterparts in a bad light, a situation with negative consequences on further trade and travel.

Figure 9 Organizational Dynamics Participants Socializing

Here the members of the Organizational Dynamics team have a chance to sit back, socialize and observe at a restaurant in Prague in the Czech Republic. Photo taken in 2000 by David M. Marcinişzyn.



As with any culture, the true meaning of a culture's symbols are not always revealed by simple object exposure without having experienced the object or symbol in the environment in which it normally resides. When exposed to a new cultural environment people tend to compare what they know, or what they think they know, to past experiences, most frequently their own culture. They blind themselves to the new culture. They find fault in service which would be a perfectly normal level in the host country but does not live up to the visitor's expectations. (A frequent complaint of American visitors to the Czech Republic; conversely, it should be noted, Czechs visiting the West are thrilled with the quality of service and courtesy they receive in shops, restaurants, and other stages of the public sphere).



### Sweden –Living as a Nation

In collectivist societies, collective interests prevail over individual interests while the reverse is true in individualist societies. In Sweden, it is most accurate to say that individual interests are respected so long as they do not harm collective interests. Collective interests, the well-being of the society as a whole, continue to be a very important part of the country's foundation.

The government and state influence over Sweden's commerce, education and people have led the country to be fervently nationally minded, with a strong focus on the well being of society as a whole. The individualistic trait of laws and rights being the same for all is ardently embraced and truly lived. While the socialist governments of Sweden did not succeed in large-scale nationalization, they clearly play a bigger role in the economy than in most other capitalist countries. Similarly, the state control of the economy, barely mitigated by the more right-wing—more accurately, centrist—tendencies of the 1980s and early 1990s (Weibull, 1993) suggests an economy based on collective interests, not individual ones.

While individual aspiration and freedom are important in Sweden, the value attributed to egalitarianism is higher. Similarly, while “self-actualization by every individual” (Hofstede, 1997, p. 73) is an important goal in many Swedish institutions, in the end, “harmony and consensus in society are ultimate goals” (Hofstede, 1997, p. 73).

In understanding the Swedes, Svensson writes that

There are many ways to describe the character of the Swedes; some stem from history, others from the difficulty of living in a harsh climate and others from societal norms and expectations. It is important to remember that there will always be many exceptions to every description, but many Swedes will fit in to the descriptions (2000, p. 38).

Svensson writes about a lottery game that allows the viewers to see the reaction of winners from four different countries, Norway, Denmark, Finland, and Sweden. Each country responds to the news differently; the Norwegians begin singing, the Danes celebrate at a restaurant, the Finns are chasing each other around with twigs and shouting and the Swede is:

Sitting on his couch in the living room, surrounded by his family. As the winning number comes on the television, he says in a moderately pleased voice “Well, it looks like I won.” His wife says, “Well done” and smiles to herself, and the family settles back to watching television. And when you have spent some time in Sweden you can imagine this happening (Svensson, 2000, p. 38).

The cultural differences between the Swedish people and their neighbors can present difficulties for those individuals traveling to Sweden for business or pleasure; for example, as was noted in the Czech Republic Americans tend to be much louder than the Swedish people when carrying on a conversation in a public place. Morrison (2000) also notes this, and cautions American visitors to Sweden to be aware of the tone of their voice. Although the large quantity of immigrants that make up the population of Sweden predispose it to be free of the xenophobia suffered by so many of its neighbors, cultural differences such as speaking tones can create misunderstanding and conflict between the natives and their foreign visitors.

The ability to learn about a different culture presents itself when we experience conflicts or inconvenience in the country we are visiting. True learning occurs when we ask the questions, “Why is this person acting in a way that is different from the way I would act? Why don’t I have the same type of accommodations?” Epiphanies come from those times when we don’t feel comfortable or where we don’t understand how to relate.

Why is understanding the differences among societies important? In order to “manage resources and the production of goods and services,” as members of a truly global economy, we

must understand that the members of this global economy have societies which are regulated by cultures which are different than our own (Webster's II, 1984, p. 222). It is only through rationalizing these differences and trying to find ways to enhance communication and cross-cultural understanding that we can hope to jointly build a global economy that is beneficial for all of its members.

On a micro level, an understanding of the differences between global societies is essential if we are to embrace the diversity among the population in the United States-a country of immigrants. By understanding the cultural underpinnings of the workforce increased understanding and communication is fostered which will, in turn, lead to higher productivity. It also allows for a free exchange of ideas among populations which aid in personal enrichment and eases the culture shock brought on by immigration.

#### Greece-Living as a Nation

The strong collectivistic tendencies noted in the study of Greek's institutions make it obvious that among the Greek nation is a tremendous sense of community and national pride. One evening in Greece I could not sleep, so I decided to take a walk on the road outside of my hotel. About 20 minutes after my departure I was approached by a man who inquired after my nationality. The small percentage of anti-American sentiment in the city made me hesitant to answer; however, after informing him that I was indeed an American he revealed that he was a Greek tour guide, and we had the opportunity to walk and talk.

He explained that the prevailing Greek opinion of Americans is that they are "dumb", a statement that was consistent with Fiada's description of the Greek view of Americans as "naïve and to be taken advantage of" (1996, p. 10). The gentleman went on to say that many



Greeks feel that American's are pushing their value system on the world. They relate America with Nazi Germany, believing that America has control over NATO-a belief that may be due to America's dominance following the collapse of communist Russia.

This Nazi sentiment was also expressed in our final presentations upon our return, wherein Charles McMann drew a representation of graffiti which he encountered which showed the swastika above the word NATO. (See Figure 10)

Figure 10 Swastika Graffiti

Graffiti seen in Athens, Greece as displayed in a presentation by Charles McMann. Photograph taken in 1999 by David Marciniszyn.



This impression of America and American society was propagated by the Greek media, and the negative sentiments it creates reveals the sense of fierce, unquestioning loyalty present within the Greek nation. This loyalty was also displayed through Costas, an acquaintance, who informed me as we walked down Panepistimiou Street one day that, “You are my friend, but if my government stated that I must kill you to protect my family and my country, I would do this without hesitation.”

One has only to speak with a Greek to taste the rich heritage that they call their own. Rawlins writes:

“When a Greek speaks, his whole personality is involved: body, soul and spirit. In him, often in spite of him, the spirit of Greece is heard. He does not speak mere words, but things, realities. These realities compose history, philosophy, religion, song, literature, warfare, want: the whole spectrum of humanity *a la Grecque*” (1997, p. 54).

The national pride of the Greek comes spilling out of his mouth with every word that he speaks, and visitors to this country’s shores are able to testify that it is richly deserved. Kizilos writes when speaking about her travels that, “I had left without anticipating the pleasures of walking around a blue and white country. I did not know that, even in Athens, the colors of Greece are different, that the mountains are made of white rock and the buildings are marble and white cement and a shining blue sky spans it all. I did not know that the country, magically, was the color of its flag. I knew nothing” (1997, p. 13).

Figure 11 The Grecian Flag

Photo taken in Athens, Greece in 1999 by David Marciniszyn.



Although the Greeks are, for the most part, amenable to foreign visitation to their land a certain amount of xenophobia still exists. Alexandra Fiada states that a “‘xenophobe’ in Greek means the native who doesn’t like the strangers who visit his land. The reasons for this are often as simple and as complicated as a difference in cultural habits; again, the tendency of Americans to be excessively loud when out in public serves to further the Greek resentment. Kizilos describes the typical Greek establishment and the behavior of its customers when she writes that “on the corner was an ouzeri – a plain, well scrubbed, old fashioned place with chairs and tables set out on the pavement. Every night an octopus was barbecued on a brazier just outside the entrance where customers gathered and talked in soft voices” (1997, p. 34).



The simple step of understanding the Greek culture and nationality can make tremendous strides in facilitating western immigration and visitation among the nationals; a vital step forward in the development of a functional and effective global economy.

### China-Living as a Nation

China's fierce national sense of self and strictly regulated cultural mores can make international relations difficult without a thorough understanding of its underlying cultural norms. Attempts to alter China's way of life to conform to western standards and viewpoints have historically been disastrous. Take, for example, the introduction of the Coca-Cola industry to China. During a meeting the General Manager of Coca-Cola, Mr. George Chu, stated that one of the toughest things that his company had to accomplish in China was to create a cold drink market (See Figure 12). Despite Coke's popularity customers who purchased the refrigerated version of the product were returning it, claiming that the drink was "too cold and they would like a warmer one."

Figure 12 A Refrigerated Soda Fountain in Beijing

A refrigerated Coke fountain found outside one of the shops by the Forbidden City of Beijing. Photograph taken in 1998 by David Marciniszyn



The explanation provided by Mr. Chu for this phenomenon was the Chinese perception that beverages that are cold are not safe. The water quality in most of China is poor; therefore, it would normally be unsafe to drink anything that has not been boiled or has not remained hot or even warm. Marketing executives believed that in order to increase sales the Chinese must be taught to enjoy the product cold; however, the question arises as to whether this is absolute truth or simply a reflection of the views of the American Coca-Cola company. Would it not be wiser to accommodate the temperature of the product to the preferences of the consumer?

Another interesting dilemma involving the differing perceptions of China and the United States was brought up in a discussion with one of my classmates. Americans doing business with China often lose bids to Japanese contractors slipping bribes “under the table” to the Chinese. The practice of bribery in the professional community is considered morally reprehensible to the American businessman; however, Terpstra and David write that “one culture’s illegal, illicit, or shameful activity is another culture’s normal practice” (1991, p. 10). In reality it is part of a “Backstage Culture” which is not revealed by a first look at the ‘surface’ behavior of the society (Terpstra & David, 1991, p. 11).

An in-depth understanding of the underlying societal mores in Chinese culture is vital when attempting cross-societal interaction on any level, as an offense to their principles and their “face” will bring the experience to an end before it has begun. There is no substitute for learning through first hand interaction with the culture, something I had the opportunity to discover personally when our otherwise packed itinerary allowed myself and my group to have a free day in Shanghai during our stay.

I had made prior arrangements to meet, for the second time, a friend of my friend Mr. Q. After an initial meeting earlier in the week, Mr. S. (his name has been withheld) was insistent that he show me around the city. Knowing that, Mr. S. was probably showing respect for his friend Mr. Q., I eventually agreed to the outing (following the ritual practice of initially declining several times). I was already prepared by some of the readings and additional research I had done that he would wish to pay for all the activities and the meal.

I knew that he was taking time away from his family to entertain me, a person whom he did not personally know, but was a friend of his friend; as a result, there were several instances throughout the course of the day during which I was made to feel uncomfortable as a result of his generosity. I knew through information I had been given that Mr. S. was making only \$200 U.S. dollars per month. He had spent around \$30 on our outing, amounting to 15% of his total monthly wages. Despite the fact that it would have cost him face were I to insist on paying for the day's activities my American upbringing caused me a great deal of guilt.

A second problem I faced during our stay, particularly in my interactions with Mr. S., was precisely how many times was considered ritually acceptable before agreeing to an invitation. Despite the difficulties, however, the 6 hours that I spent with Mr. S. provided me with valuable insight into the traditions and culture of the Chinese people that I would not have been given any other way.

DeMente states that "The recent "Westernization" of the skyline and the hemline, along with such surface symbols as Kentucky Fried Chicken® (See Figure 13.), is not necessary a reflection of the people. These symbols may make the foreigner in China feel a lot more comfortable, but they do not always make it easier to do business there" (1996, p. 39). It is



vitaly important to the future of cross-societal relations with China that an effort is made to understand and accommodate their own particular sense of national pride and culture.

Figure 13 A Kentucky Fried Chicken in Shanghai

A Kentucky Fried Chicken In Shanghai – Note The Lighted Coke Advertisement On The Pole In The Foreground – 1998 Photograph By David Marciniszyn



### Summary of Chapter 9

Regardless of whether a society is primarily collectivistic or individualistic its national pride plays a large role in its identity. For a collectivistic country the individualistic tendencies of its people cause shame and embarrassment, with citizens striving to maintain harmony among their society at all costs. The individual accomplishments of their leaders and figureheads generate a national feeling of pride.

Individualistic nations retain that same feeling of national pride; however, these nations promote a greater amount of their focus on helping their citizens to succeed in individual arenas. Members of individualistic nations are loyal to their government, but it is not the unthinking, unquestioning loyalty found in many of their collectivistic counterparts. Members of individualistic nations will challenge their government, almost excessively blunt in their honesty as they take steps to effect the reforms that they feel are necessary.

National identity can provide some clues to the degree of individualism found within a society, but it is far less accurate than many other indicators and must be considered very carefully on a case by case basis to account for the differences in personalities of a society's individual members.

## CHAPTER 10

### CONCLUSIONS

#### Czech Republic

In order for the Czech Republic to functionally operate its members must find a balance between collectivism and individualism—a balance that will allow it to move forward into the new future it has designed for itself without being lost in chaos. The interaction of the institutions of family, education, workplace, religion and social programs, as well as the Czech perception of themselves as a nation and their attitudes toward other nations, serves to maintain this balance. For the “little Czech” individuality matters; however, the value of individuality takes place in a society that has a very strong sense of group, family, and nation. The Czech Republic displays throughout the majority of its institutions a strong collectivistic tendency. People are born into extended families or other in-groups which continue to protect them in exchange for loyalty. The country has a lower per capita GNP than many of its neighbors, with its economy primarily based on collective interest rather than personal gain. Above all, harmony is the primary goal of all members of society.

I would also venture to suggest that Czech tendency to collectivism would be stronger if their experience of state-sanctioned collectivism (Communism) were not so negative. Tim Nollen supports this negative feeling when he writes that “communism was a real leech that Czechs are still working to disengage from; this is a long term, ongoing project” (1997, p. 28). Overall, however, the balance between collectivism and individualism is sufficient to keep the Czech Republic functioning optimally and pave the way for its integration into a global market.



### Sweden

Based on Hofstede's data alone one would likely hypothesize that the Swedish society was individualistic; however countries that fall closer to the mid point appear to have "split personalities" which fall into a gray area somewhere between individualistic and collective. Swedish society appears to be much more balanced between the two poles than many other countries, with a strong government involvement in its people's education and well being balancing out the individualistic tendencies bred by the country's economic state.

Sweden demonstrates the skill with which individualism and collectivism can combine in a single society, with neither being predominant. Sweden's current system is such that it stands a good chance of surviving unscathed in the coming years, free from the radical change that the imposition of a global society will make on many of its neighbors.

### Greece

As Rawlins concluded, when discussing the Greek "his individuality matters and is assertive. He thinks out, is argumentative in staying and defending his views" (Rawlins, 1997, p. 63). Despite the relative importance of individualism, however, per Hofstede's criteria it can be concluded that Greece is still primarily a collectivistic society. Religion and the state play a large role in governing the events of society and regulating its education and the advancement of its members. Grecian citizens are strongly focused on the well being of the group, with the family providing the primary social structure of the society, and when it comes to ensuring the well being of society's members the responsibility lies primarily on their shoulders.

That does not mean that individualism is non-existent. The parental pressure for success suggests an ongoing individualistic tendency and acceptance of private enterprise that is essential

in maintaining a balance between individualism and collectivism, preventing stagnation and helping Greece to take its place in the global economy.

### China

Throughout almost all aspects of Chinese society China conforms strictly to the morals, norms and personal guidelines of a collectivist nation. The value placed on the family in the decision making process and the social importance of assimilating with the “in-group” are consistent with Hofstede’s criterion pertaining to collectivism, as is the strong government hand that is present in China’s educational system. The significance of interpersonal relations within the business world provide a singly unselective insight into the role of collectivism in Chinese society and the lingering effects of its long history of Communism.

China has frequently wandered too near to the pole of complete collectivism in the past, resulting in an extreme economic stagnation. As a result the current Chinese economy provides for a certain amount of individualistic expression among its citizens through private enterprise and education. China is a testament to those looking at formerly Communist nations and wondering about their ability to conform to the new trends of society and commerce and take their place in the vast network of the global economy.

## CHAPTER 11

## SOCIETAL TYPES AS THEY ARE VIEWED DOMESTICALLY

Is individualism better than collectivism? For Americans who have been raised in the cult of individualism the two terms are value-laden, and the former is much more positive than the latter. Gress would argue that:

The causes of western incompetence (today) are variously defined by various authors, but one useful way of explaining the idea was to see it as a crisis of Western individualism. Western political, economic, and cultural success rested at bottom on a Western notion of the individual as autonomous and self-reliant but at the same time moderate, respectful of tradition, civic minded, and culturally literate – the individual of the vigorous virtues and their corresponding obligations. Western incompetence, whether manifested in sloth and decline of technical prowess or in social anarchy was what happened when the ideal Western individual discarded the vigorous virtues in favor of other values such as self-realization, consumerism, and the need for self-esteem rather than the desire for knowledge, and began to prefer emotional satisfaction to hard-earned skill (Gress, 1998, p. 535).

Simply because Western upbringing has predisposed Americans to a particular way of thinking doesn't mean it is correct. The incorporation of a certain amount of collectivism in a society is essential if the society is to maintain harmonious relations; pure individualism would cause the society to fall apart at the seams as its members scrambled overtop of one another in a quest for domination.

Societies as a whole try to maintain cohesiveness. It is the method by which societies chose to maintain cohesiveness, which differs from society to society. This explains the degree of individualism and collectivism in each society. Some societies may have the outward appearance of strong individualism, while still maintaining an underlying collectivist culture that regulates the cohesiveness of the society.



Understanding how a foreign society functions is a vital part of doing business on an international basis as countries are stepping beyond their boundaries to form a web connecting businesses around the globe. The study of multiple cultures and their society types has provided me with a deeper insight into how persons of different cultures interact, with the longer term goal of providing a firmer basis for appreciating the differences and opinions of individuals from other nations. This sort of understanding is crucial if we are to effectively communicate with one and other and to build a global economy.

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## END NOTES

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<sup>2</sup> Jan Palach was a philosophy student who immolated himself on 16 January 1969 to protest the end of the “Prague Spring,” the renewal of Czechoslovakia started in 1968 by Dubcek and crushed by the intervention of the Warsaw back in August 1968.

<sup>3</sup> Long-time Swedish prime minister—a Social Democrat of course—notable here for driving many of the school reforms discussed in this paper.